

**WORLD PROBLEMS  
AND JAIN ETHICS**

*By*

**BENI PRASAD,**

*M. A., Ph. D., D. Sc. Econ. (Lond.)*

*Late Professor of Politics, Allahabad University.*

## **Preface**

The Second edition of this booklet is being published without any additions or alterations. We regret to announce that the literary world would now no more be benefited by the sound scholarship and deep learning of Dr. Beni Prasad who breathed his last few months after the first edition of this booklet.

Dalsukh Malvania.

Secretary,

**Jain Cultural Research Society.**

## WORLD PROBLEMS AND JAIN ETHICS.

### The Scope of Religion.

The term religion has been defined in various ways, but psychologically it may be said to represent an adaptation, at once extensive and intensive, to the totality of the universe and to whatever spiritual principle may underlie it. Accordingly on the one hand it comprises a view of life and matter in their wholeness and inter-relationship, and on the other hand covers in broad outline the modes and associations through which man finds expression and self-realisation. So far as this last aspect is concerned, it is worth while to enquire how religion incorporates those principles which the growing experience of the human race seems to establish as calculated to secure universal welfare. In other words, how far does it embody the permanent elements of social justice, welfare and happiness ?

### Jain Ethics.

From the social point of view, then, we may briefly review the ethical code of Jainism. Briefly, it begins with five *Anuvratas* or little-vows—(1) Non-violence ( अहिंसा ), (2) Truthfulness ( सत्य ), (3) Honesty ( अस्तेय ), (4) Continence ( ब्रह्मचर्य ), (5) Stoicism ( अपरिग्रह ). It will take too long to expound all these *Vratas*, *Anuvratas*, *Gunavratas* and *Shikshavratas* and the features ( लक्षण ) of Dharma. But it may be permitted

to say a few words from the standpoint of social relationships, attitudes and organisation on the five *Anuvratas* which constitute the foundation and the most important part of the ethical code. There is no more conclusive evidence of the deep insight of our ancient teachers than their recognition of non-violence (अहिंसा) as the first and the greatest of the principles of higher life.

# I

## NON-VIOLENCE ( अहिंसा )

### The Role of Force and Fraud in History.

So far human relationships have been regulated very largely, though not exclusively, through the instrument of brute force, that is through the exertion of superior prowess by individuals, groups, classes, nations or races to exploit others, to keep them in subordination, and to make them minister to their own interests. All this has constituted a standing negation of the worth of personality as personality, the dignity of man as man. Secondly, the exertion of force has been met by short-cuts or evasion, that is, hypocrisy or fraud, on the parts of the victims. Force or fraud, indeed, complement each other and are revealed in any analysis of social relationships as two aspects of a single process. Nor is the practice of fraud confined to subjects. It is used even more extensively by masters to fill up the gaps necessarily left by force to round off the scheme of overlordship and exploitation. Subjec-

tion runs counter to the fundamental urges of personality, that is, to freedom, which Graham Wallas defined in a happy phrase as continuous initiative to growth from within, to fulness and harmony in growth, to aspiration and creativeness, in a word, to self-realization. Subjection, accordingly, evokes resistance. The masters seek to weaken the springs of resistance and to organise acquiescence through propaganda, that is, through lowering the scale of values and playing on baser impulses like fear, greed, inertia and selfishness. Human adjustments have thus been permeated by force and fraud, so that a modern sociologist has concluded that they are just the principles on which civilisation has so far been based.

### **The Root Problem of the Modern Age.**

The indictment is true, above all, of the modern age which has during the last hundred years witnessed the annihilation of distance and close juxtaposition of divergent races, peoples, cultures and outlooks. Efforts of a new adjustment were inevitable but these have often been inspired by motives of group aggrandisement so that an eminent scientist and social thinker, Bertrand Russell, is led to observe that the concept of power is as fundamental to politics as that of energy to physics. The progress of science may be regarded as the crucial factor in the history of the last two hundred years. It released forces of production and organisation which have brought comfort and entertainment, knowledge

and culture, peace and security within potential reach of every man, woman and child in the world. But the potentialities have so far been realised only with a few classes in a few countries and that, too, only for interludes between wars. The reasons are not far to seek. Firstly, the new energies were largely annexed by the old passions of strife, hatred, exploitation and frustration centring round race and nation, class and sect. So men are confronted today with the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty; and of darkness in the midst of untold facilities of enlightenment.

### **Disappointments and Disillusionments.**

This is the problem with which the world is confronted today and for the solution of which various plans have been suggested by philosophers and statesmen. As the last war (1914-18) drew to its close twenty-five years ago, ardent spirits everywhere applied themselves to the discovery of ways and means of democracy, self-determination, international co-operation and adjudication, disarmament, outlawry of war and perpetual peace. The spirit of the age seemed to find its embodiment in Woodrow Wilson, the American President, whose idealism and eloquence electrified whole people in the east and the west alike. But twenty years sufficed to bring about a complete disillusionment and to precipitate the present war. The disappointments have been due to a mistake very frequent in politics, that of

treating the symptoms as distinct from the deep seated causes of political and economic maladies. Politics and diplomacy move in an atmosphere of hurry and restlessness. Statesmen are apt to be satisfied with a vision of what appears on the surface and a treatment of superficial complaints. That is what happened once again in the years 1918-20, literally on a worldwide scale. The result was the re-emergence or rather the continuance of all the old evils—competition in armaments, secret diplomacy, aggressive nationalism, imperialism, exploitation of the weak by the strong, race pride and war. One doleful consequence of the failure deserves special mention. The recent disillusionments have produced cynicism at the present moment when the need for great ideas and noble enthusiasms is more urgent than ever before. Western statemanship is fighting shy of radical reconstruction. It seems to have lost confidence in the future in the bargain.

### War in the Social Context.

At this juncture, then, it is necessary to point out that war, armament and Machiavellian diplomacy are not isolable phenomena. Immediate motives and occasions apart, they represent a method of pressing claims, a way of resolving disputes; in short, an instrument of policy natural to a scheme of things which admits the validity of violence (हिंसा) and is grounded in part in the exertion of force by group upon

group. If disputes have been settled on the plane of force, it is because social life has been moving on the corresponding planes of hatred, frustration and exploitation. They have permeated international relationships, internal organisation, literature and outlook so deeply. Force and fraud are still writ so largely over associated life that reform must be anchored to the first principles. A tremendous effort, rational and moral, is needed to bring home to the world that a way out of the present strife into universal peace and welfare lies in revising human relationships so as to substitute the principle of non-violence ( अहिंसा ) for that of force.

### Lesson of Experience in International Affairs.

The experience of the League of Nations, set up in 1919, and that of disarmament commissions and conferences, which continued upto 1934, demonstrated that the elimination of war, which is really a symptom, depends on the elimination of the deeper cause—the violence—which underlies group adjustments all round. A move to the higher plane of non-violence implies that the whole idea of domination of a group over another be given up in the realm of politics and economics and the principles of freedom of growth and equality of opportunity be recognised in a practical form for all peoples, in Europe or America, Asia or Africa.



### **Non-violence in Internal Affairs.**

Here is envisaged a new chapter not only in international relationships, but also in internal arrangements. For it is clear even to a superficial observer that much of the internal economy in most countries rests on a denial of equality of opportunity to large sections of the population. Our systems of caste and class rest in ultimate analysis partly on force and make-believe and partly on tradition and habit. The new possibilities of plenty have knocked out whatever rational validity had been derived from the antiquated insufficiency of material commodities to go round. The way has now been cleared for the application of different maxims to human affairs. The principle of non-violence really means that equal regard be paid to the welfare of every single man, woman and child, and equal, effective and maximum opportunities of self-realisation be placed within reach of all.

### **The Positive Role of Non-Violence.**

It will thus appear that the principle of non-violence, far from being a negative precept as the term suggests, is in its practical application, a positive principle of the farthest reach. It points to a wholesale transformation in the internal government of States as well as in their mutual contracts to a revision of social and economic arrangements. It is a matter of

the first importance that all institutional re-organisation be accompanied by a corresponding mental attitude ; in short, a corresponding outlook on life. As Plato and Aristotle realised, every set of institution requires a virtue, a morality in harmony with it. If the latter is not forthcoming, institutional re-organisation loses organic vitality and becomes mechanical, and in the long run, either ineffective or perverted. Hence the principle of non-violence has to be accepted as a creed. It may be desirable here to guard against one misapprehension.

### **Dimensions of the Problem.**

It is not implied above that human relationships are based entirely on force. That would be an impossible condition of things. Society simply could not endure in such an environment. A great deal of sympathy and mutual aid, affection and solicitude, sacrifice and devotion have always gone to the making of the family, the wider associations and of community as a whole. The point which it is sought to enforce here is that there has not been enough of them ; that there has been too heavy an alloy of brute force and that the latter has to be eliminated to make room for a complete way of the social virtues. It must, in the second place, be brought home that there exists a necessary organic connection between the ethics of the so called individual life and the social environment. Individuality

is a social affair; that is to say, personality is a social product. It is embedded in social adjustments. All human experience goes to prove that exhortation and persuasion are not enough to call forth the moral life on the community-wide scale. The seed requires an appropriate soil and atmospheric conditions which constitute the environment. That is the truth underlying the proposition that a life of real non-violence is possible for mankind as a whole only within a set of social institutions and practices that are based on non-violence. The principle of non-violence, then, really implies that life should be elevated altogether from the plane of force to that of reason, persuasion, accommodation, tolerance and mutual service.

## II

### TRUTHFULNESS ( सत्य ).

It will be observed that the principle of non-violence is closely allied to that of sincerity or truthfulness. It has been pointed out above that force from above evokes fraud from below. We have also seen that force is by itself frequently incapable of achieving the objective, that it entails too severe a strain and that it usually calls the assistance of fraud or deception. This is the truth underlying the dictum that all is fair in war. War indeed includes stratagems of all possible kinds. It has under modern conditions become totalitarian, dependent, that is to say, on a complete mobilization

of intellectual, moral and material resources. The weight of armaments seems at first sight to crush public opinion into an irrelevance; but the totalitarian character of modern war really enhances the importance of public support and explains the assiduity with which the organised might of governments seeks to manufacture assent through psychologised propaganda at present. So, it has well been said that truth is the first casualty in war.

Compulsory primary education ranked as the most solid achievement to the credit of the 19th century. But its gains seem to have been more than counterbalanced by the propaganda with which the atmosphere is literally charged today and which can be picked up by radio machine anywhere on land or sea or air. Nor is the situation radically different in the home politics of States. Standards of veracity are proverbially low in elections and touch lower depths in the intrigues that surround courts and bureaucracies.

Here again the way of truth is as straight as that of non-violence. There is a proverb that truth conquers ( सत्यमेव जयते ). It is true if it means that truth or sincerity prevails in the long run. But it is misleading if it is held to signify that truthfulness in word, thought and deed is an easy road to success. Today the path of sincerity is strewn with thorns. It is beset with opposition, persecution and suffering. It demands courage, fortitude and stoical endurance.

Untruthfulness, indeed, is an aspect of the process that revolves round force and can be eliminated only with the latter. It may be possible for men today to speak the literal truth in private life. But that does not touch more than the fringe of the problem. The problem is two-fold; how to render it feasible for the average man to behave with perfect sincerity, honesty and straightforwardness in private as well as public life and how to render it feasible for corporations, political parties and States, specially in their dealings with foreigners, to maintain the same standards of sincerity and frankness as are expected in private life. The social interest demands an environment in which truth will pay not only in the long run but also immediately and readily. Here again we perceive that life is a single whole; its aspects are interdependent; things inevitably form a circle. It is necessary to break a vicious circle at as many points as possible. It is patent that a conscious effort at higher standards of truth is necessary both in national and international affairs. The higher the standards of truthfulness, the easier it would become to lift society from the present rut to a place of greater reason and higher morality.

### III

#### HONESTY ( अस्तेय ).

It is obvious that such a social re-organisation postulates cordial and habitual respect on the part of every one for the rights of every one else. This

is the inner core of the third *Anuvrata* styled **अस्तेय** or **अचौर्य**. Literally, it only means abstinence from stealing; but the underlying spirit of it is that one should not encroach on the rights of others but should always keep the social interest in view.

It is not necessary here to discuss the philosophy of rights ( **स्वत्व** ) but it may be pointed out that rights are those social conditions which are necessary or favourable to the development of personality. The rights, that is to say, the right conditions of social life are to be enjoyed by all. They are to be enjoyed in common. Rights cannot be a purely individual affair, they are essentially co-operative. By dint of co-operation they are brought into being, by dint of co-operation they are sustained. If the conditions of right living are to be maintained for all, every one has not only to expect them for himself but also has so to act as not to hamper their enjoyment by others. Nay more, every one should positively encourage such condition for all. What is a right in regard to oneself is a duty in regard to others. Rights and duties are thus interdependent. They are two aspects of the same thing. If one looks at them from one's own standpoint of others, they are duties. Both are social and both are, in substance, conditions of right living to be secured to all members of society. It is futile to consider whether rights are prior to

duties or *vice versa*. Both hang together. They are the counterpart of each other. If every one insisted on his rights for himself but neglected his duties towards others, there would soon be no rights left for any one. This is the basic lesson in that art of living together which every one has to master afresh.

It need scarcely be pointed out that respect for the rights of others is also an application of the principle of non-violence.

#### IV

#### CONTINENCE ( ब्रह्मचर्य ).

Respect for rights and regard to duties are things that cannot be imposed for any length of time from above. Indeed, the enforcement of morality is contradiction in terms. It is possible, of course, to promote morality indirectly by organising conditions favourable to its observance. We have just seen that non-violence can be practised on a large scale only in an environment no longer permeated by force. But the inner core of morality is something beyond external control. The attitude has to grow from within. Social life is founded, in ultimate analysis, in self-control. That is the implication of the fourth *Anuvrata*, ब्रह्मचर्य, in the wider sense.

#### Character.

Human nature is neither good nor bad. It is plastic, that is, raw material for character. Growth consists in achievement of harmony and balance as

part of an expansive and progressive adjustment to the environment. It implies the interfusion of all impulses with a more or less definite idea of purposes; that is to say, moral judgment as an outcome of fusion of intellect and emotion. It implies, secondly, a harmony or balance of impulses with one another. From such a balance and from such an interfusion emerges a unified trend of endeavour which may be styled volition. Will is the unification for the time being of various volitions. A completely old fashioned will is the most penetrating of all the definitions of character that have been offered. Its basis is not that crude expressionism which some pseudo-psychologists have, in their reaction to old fashioned repressions, been tempted to champion. Self-expression by itself may range through many grades to anarchy, destructive of all the values and of the abiding happiness. In the interest of personality, self-expression is to be permeated with purpose, harmony and with that higher social accommodation which rests on something which is variously called altruism, sacrifice or service and which represents the highest reach of personality. Here is the case for discipline, internal discipline radically different from coercion. Coercion may lead to down-right repression or frustration. Discipline (संयम), like the pruning of a shrub, assists the beauty and flowering of the soul.

#### Sublimation.

If a person were to follow every chance impulse,



to surrender to every stimulus from the environment, he would be lost in contradictions, trivialities and superficialities; the deeper springs of life would remain untouched and he would soon be overwhelmed by a sense of emptiness. He must grow in self-control as in so many other ways. He must select, form habits of selection and harmonise the selections. He must deliberately transfer the interest from the rejected possibilities to those which are selected. The energy evoked by the rejected stimuli is enlisted in the service of those which are selected. The cravings which are generated but not followed up are diverted to mix with those which are accepted for satisfaction. This process of sublimation begins as soon as the child absorbs the social morality. The individual grows in sublimation with the increase in energy, stimuli and cravings on the one hand and moral selection, organisation and self-control on the other. Sublimation is the moral antithesis of repression. If impulses, cravings and tendencies were not controlled they would dissipate energy in all directions, arrest growth and ruin the constitution. But if they were merely repressed, they would form complexes, generate internal conflict and disharmony and force their way up in disguise through dreams, motives, anxieties and perversions. Sublimation is the organic device of achieving self-control without disintegration of personality. Every one attains to sublimation in a greater or lesser measure but

it remains imperfect or is fixated at a point without the force of ideas and ideals, the inspiration of a purpose and a vision of the higher life. Sublimation represents an equilibration of energy in accordance with moral growth and aspiration and a straightening of growth as a whole. Automatically, it resolves tensions and therefore opens the way to a healthy development of the sense of good and bad, clarification of ideals and to spontaneous and energetic participation in the common life. It facilitates the all-round organisation of self which is the mainstay of morality. But for it, the individual would be doomed to a plane of knowledge, efficiency and practical ambition far below the best of which he is capable. Sublimation is part of growth because it raises the moral standard of life and forestalls the tendency of the subconscious and the unconscious, ( as they are called, though not with perfect accuracy ) to drag the course of life down. Sublimation co-ordinates the frontage of the mind with the hinterland and maintains the unity of life, weaving the impulses, sentiments and ideals into a harmonious whole. The elimination or transmutation of disturbing factors secures the wholeness and, therefore, the freedom and continuity of development of personality. It is the rise of personality to moral order, practical orientation of the individual to the realm of value, resolution of the tension between him and the environment. It is the way to happiness which eludes short-cuts

because it is a condition of personality resulting from the development and harmony of all the aspects. Unhappiness is the natural outcome of the conflicting and confused expression of motives and tendencies.

### **Discipline.**

Sublimation is akin to discipline, the organisation of powers, the canalisation of energy, in the service of social ends whose value has been perceived. It will be observed that the essence of discipline is self-control from within and that it is the very opposite of repression from out-side. One is not drilled into discipline; one grows into it as one learns to find one's own good, in the general good and to pursue it unflinchingly. Discipline is a constructive force, a positive, not a negative control. It directs the flow of energies into specific channels; produces thoroughness and a sense of responsibilities. It is at once the socialisation and the individualization of the mind. It contains a large intellectual element, a perception of the meaning of caste, a choice among the divergent tendencies induced by the various factors of all facts and difficulties and an adjustment to the ends conceived and the means available. Discipline furnishes the supreme illustration of the interpenetration of intelligence and morality. Social concepts, the meaning of social institutions and situations must be so thoroughly grasped as to be integrated within the activities

of life. The disciplined person continually re-creates the moral order in which he has his being and contributes continuously to the moral life of the society of which he is a part.

### Self-Control.

In social relationships, this discipline may be described as self-control. It is the foundation of all higher moral life in its social, economic and political aspects. Custom or law would be powerless in the absence of self-control on the part of those whom they seek to guide. A certain measure of self-control is fortunately present in every society. It is necessary, however, to deepen it as well as to enlighten it, so that it may form the basis and radiate an energy requisite for the type of economic state that would foster universal welfare.

## V

### STOICISM ( अपरिग्रह )

The discipline ( संयम ) inculcated by the fourth *Anuvrata* leads logically to the fifth and last of the *Anuvratas*. It is called अपरिग्रह and is in its many implications original to Jainism. It really denotes a certain self-restraint in the face of pleasures, a certain stoicism before temptations, a certain detachment from superfluities and super-abundances. In expounding its implications, ethical writers emphasised that one should not feel too much attachment towards his own material possessions and should resist all tempta-

tions. One may keep wealth and commodities to satisfy one's requirements but should not lose oneself in the pursuit of material gain. At the same time, one should rise above prejudices, jealousies, greed, vanity, fear, hatred, susceptibility etc.

If this *Anuvrata* were followed, it would prevent that ruthless and lustful competition for wealth and empire which is the bane of the present age and is responsible for its gravest ills. The attitude of mind which it inculcates is perhaps more necessary today than ever before. It is the negation of sordid, all-absorbing materialism. Science has multiplied production and scattered superfluities here and there. Modern industry and commerce have fostered growth of large towns where life is lived not only in great hurry but also on an artificial plane. Men are caught up in a vast network of impersonal forces which seem to defy understanding. They succumb to psychological maladies, nervous breakdown, partial or complete, which is one of the most tragic phenomena of the present age. The battle of life, that is, the higher life, has become very difficult and can be fought only with that attitude of stoicism which the fifth *Anuvrata* stresses. From slightly different point of view, this *Anuvrata* may be described as the right sense of proportion, a perception of the true scale of values.

### Ethical Wholeness.

It will be apparent from a review of the *Anuvratas* that they are interdependent and supplementary. The application of one to human relationships leads logically to that of others and in fact would stultify itself without the others. Only there is primacy belonging to the first of them, that is, non-violence. It is the foundation of all higher life. In the Jain as well as Buddhist code, it is wider than humanitarianism, for it embraces the whole of sentient creation. Its comprehensiveness, logically complete, is a further illustration of the ethical life being a function of mental attitude and outlook. Like non-violence honesty ( अस्तेय ) and stoicism ( अपरिग्रह ) are negative only in appearance and really positive in their application. Together the five *Anuvratas* constitute a single conception of life, ethical and spiritual, a consistent loyalty to the great principle of self-transcendence, a transvaluation of values.

अहिंसा—

सर्वे जीवा वि इच्छन्ति जीविषं न मरिज्जिषं ।  
 तम्हा पाणवहं घोरं निगन्था वज्जयन्ति एं ॥  
 दशवैकालिक ।  
 यो भूतेष्वभयं दद्याद्भूतेभ्यस्तस्य नो भयम् ।  
 यादृग् वितीर्यते दानं तादृगासाद्यते फलम् ॥  
 हेमचन्द्र ।  
 आत्मपरिणामहिंसनहेतुत्वात् सर्वमेव हिंसैतत् ।  
 अनृतवचनादि केवलमुदाहृतं शिष्यबोधाय ॥  
 अमृतचन्द्र ।

सत्य—

मुसावाओ अ लोगम्मि सव्वसाहूहिं गरिहिओ ।  
 अविस्सासो अ भूआणं तम्हा मोसं विवज्जे ॥  
 दशवैकालिक ।  
 धूर्तकामुकक्रव्यादचौरचार्वाकसेविता ।  
 शङ्कासङ्केतपापाढ्या त्याज्या भाषा मनीषिभिः ॥  
 शुभचन्द्र ।

अस्तेय—

अवितीर्णस्य ग्रहणं परिग्रहस्य प्रमत्तयोगाद्यत् ।  
 तत् प्रत्येयं स्तेयं सैव च हिंसा वधस्य हेतुत्वात् ॥  
 अमृतचन्द्र ।  
 अयं लोकः परलोको धर्मो धैर्यं धृतिर्मतिः ।  
 मुष्णता परकीयं स्वं मुषितं सर्वमप्यदः ॥  
 हेमचन्द्र ।

ब्रह्मचर्य—

प्राणभूतं चरित्रस्य परब्रह्मैककारणम् ॥  
 समाचरन् ब्रह्मचर्यं पूजितैरपि पूज्यते ॥  
 हेमचन्द्र ।

यदि विषयपिशाची निर्गता देहगोहात्  
 सपदि यदि विशीर्णो मोहनिद्रातिरेकः ।  
 यदि युवतिकरङ्गे निर्ममत्वं प्रपन्नो  
 भगिति ननु विवेहि ब्रह्मवीथीविहारम् ॥

शुभचन्द्र ।

अपरिग्रह—

न सो परिग्रहो वुत्तो नायपुत्तेण ताइणा ।  
 मुच्छा परिग्रहो वुत्तो इअ वुत्तं महेसिणा ॥

दशवैकालिक ।

संसारमूलमारम्भास्तेषां हेतुः परिग्रहः ।  
 तस्मादुपासकः कुर्यादल्पमल्पं परिग्रहम् ॥

हेमचन्द्र ।