

AHIMSA PARAMO DHARMAH- A JAIN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT:

Non Violence is the peak of sustainable practices. The restrictive meaning of adding the word “non” implies negation of any concept. Ahimsa certainly has a broader meaning and strict understanding of not resorting to violence and thus promoting peace. Non Violence should be practiced in thought, words and action. Hence it is rightly said “*Manasyekam, vachas ekam, karmanyekam Mahatmanam.*” Of the high souls, mind, body and speech are one and the same. Controlling oneself does not mean not caring for others and giving free course to oneself but also showing empathy and compassion to all living beings. Therefore peace and non-violence is not passive response but a positive, optimistic and constructive behavior. The ritualised compassion and repentance of lapses is best described in Jain Philosophy. A famous shloka roughly translated as “*Seeking pardon of all living beings and requesting for friendship, goodwill and free of enmity*” speaks volumes of Jain Philosophy tending towards peace as a means of Social Welfare. The neutrality of matured human mind is best described as “A mind never agitates in adversity, never elates in prosperity, bereft of passion, fear and anger the intellect stays firm.”

The paper makes an attempt to examine the primary tenets of Jain Philosophy to create awareness on global peace for harmonious existence. Sources and references will be drawn from prakrit texts highlighting the teachings of Jainism, translated editions, journal papers and related articles. An attempt would be made to promote “*Loka hita and Loka Sukha*” The principle aim is to reaffirm “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*” Concept.

Keywords: Peace, Jain Philosophy Ccompassion, Global, Humankind

INTRODUCTION:

Scriptures, Religious texts, Compendiums and many other texts by authorities have given a very air and understandable meaning of the word “Ahimsa” and the word “Dharma”. Putting them together the timeless adage “Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah” was coined. The adage would mean “Non violence is the highest form of righteousness”. The very object of human existence is based on this principle. Every human being has the onerous responsibility of following the policy of “Live and let live”. Described as a social being every individual has to follow the

policy of inclusivity, providing equity and access, by taking every human being in his fold. This is possible only in a secular world. Tenets of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and other religions in the world have proclaimed through their sacred texts and the torch bearers that the world can survive any calamity or onslaught following the principles of peace, non-violence, harmony and the like. This refers to the concept of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” which says for the generous the entire world is their family. Ancient Indian Principle of non-violence is applicable to all living beings. This concept forms the bedrock of the cardinal virtues of Jainism which are called Pancha Mahavrata. The Jaina philosophy calls for an ethical system based on Non Violence. It vouches for compassion and forgiveness in thoughts, words and deeds. The paper examines the role of Jainism in creating global peace by drawing the underlying principles and also bringing out the significance of these principles

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF JAIN PHILOSOPHY



Jain Philosophy believes, “Gyan”, “Darshan”, “Charitra” and “Taap” when practiced in a ‘Samayak’ manner, transforms to “Samayakgyan”, “Samyaktarshan” “Samayak Charitra” and “Samayak Taap” “Samyaktarshan” begets “Samayakgyan”, leading to “Samayakcharitra” and “Samyaktap”, instrumental for “Sadhana” steps towards ‘Moksh’. “Siddhatavva” the infinite potential of each soul to be “SiddhaAtma”, is recognised in Jainism reinstates faith in “MokshMarg”, systematic path shown by “Tirthankar Mahavir Swami, for awakened soul to achieve Salvation. Shrivak accepts “Arihant Parmatama” as “Dev”, “Panch Mahavrat” practicing “Nirgranth” is guru and “Kewali” inspired religion with complete faith and firm determination to attain “Samyaktarshan”, prime goal of this human form after 84 lakh birth as different life form. Tirthankar Mahavir Swamy explained “Karmabandh” in an extremely defined, detailed and accurate manner with respect to our association with all the life forms, their life span, movement, food intake, breathe, mind, nonmovement, intellect their “Atma Parinam”, the resultant karma. “Gyan Swarup” soul possessor of attributes as “Anant Gyan” and “Anantvirya”, has the potential to attain moksh by “Karma Nirjara” resulting in the “Siddha Swarup” when the Karma of this birth and previous birth gets destroyed completely

the pure soul till infinite time remains in “Siddha Swarup” and is now free from the cycle of life and death.

“Dhruvpatrak” tenth “Adhyan” of “Shri Uttaradhyan Sutra” last “Deshna” of Tirthankar Mahavir Swami in each of the thirty-four “Gatha” reminds Guru Gautam Swami to dwell on “Durlabh Manushya Bhavv”, [reaching to refrain from indulging in “Pramad” even of fraction of second. Absolute faith and belief in Principles of “Ahimsa”, “Achaury”, “Asatya”, “Aparigraha”, “Brahmacharya”, “Navv Tattva” and “Karma” is “Samyakdarshan” practicing the principles by the virtue of “ManYog”, “VachaYog” and “KayaYog” is “Samyakcharitra”. “Nirgranth Pravachan” and “Aradhana” facilitates the “Aradhak” to succeed in “Sadhana” and acquire the virtues of “Samyakgyan”. Eternal happiness “Moksh Sukh” is experienced when the soul is free from all the “Ghatiya” and “Aghatiya” Karma. “Shatavashayaks” practice of daily ritual by the awakened soul leads to inner purity “Vairagya Bhavana”. Significant emphasis is laid on activities of the mind thus “Abhayantar Tapas “Prayaschit”, “Vinay”, “Veyavrut”, “Swadhyaay”, “Kayotsarg” and “Dhyaan” are designed for followers to introspect and train self for mental discipline. Philosophy that “Samyak” mind and thought along with “Sanyam” can lead to “Samadhi,” the soul capable of taking pain, sorrow and miseries away, when engaged in the right and truthful activities establishes self in the “Sachidanand Swarup”. “AtmaKalyan” activities of the Guru encourages the Shrivak to discard “Pramad”, “Kaambhog” accept “Taap” and “Sanyam”. Monks preaches for “JanKalyan”, enlightening us about the futility of “Sansar” and guides to path of Salvation, regardless of any material gains for themselves. ‘Sadguru’ instils the faith in us that each Soul is capable of becoming a “Siddha” and attain “Siddhatavva” if follow the ‘Sadhguru’ whose life is guided by “Jin Agya”. Life of the Monks is rigorous practicing extreme austerity and penance. The monks observe an extremely strict and relevant code of conduct practicing “Mahavrat”. Monks undertake “Vihar” travel by foot only and abstain from residing at a place for more than 15 days except for the period of “Chaturmas” when they reside at a place for four months of monsoon. Seeking alms “Gochari” for sustenance and plucking of hair periodically “Locha” are other extreme practices and way of life of the monk. “Sallekhana” a practice of abstaining from all food and water intake in quest of Salvation during the final days of life is also one of the rigorous practices in Jainism. Navigating our life to “Apramat” state they help us discover the immense and eternal purity of the soul “Atma Gunasampada” and establish self in “Suddha Atma Swarup”. “Karma Nirjara”, is the prime objective of the religious festivals, rituals and practices, reflected in celebration of “Paryushan”, “Ayambil Oli”, MaunAgrarass”, “Kartik Purnima”, “Gyaan Pancham”, “Poush dashmi”, “Akshay tritya”, “Diwali”, and “Kalyanaks” of the Tirthankar. Devout practitioner indulges in practicing extreme penances and vows “Vrat”, “Niyam” and “Taap”, when practiced with the goal of “Karma Nirjara” results in “Karmashaya”.

Recognising the life in soil, water, air, fire and air the “ShrutSampan” “ShilSampan” practioner leads life as protector of “Traass” and “Stavvar” life too. Commentaries regarding “Pudgal” Jivv” tattva from the perspective of “Dravya”, “Shetra” and “Kaal”, the respective differences and mysteries from “Utsarpinni Kaal” to “Avasarpinni Kaal” helps us understand the ecology that has been existing from “Anadi Kaal” and will exist till “Anant Kaal”. Practices encourages us to protect and maintain ecological balance by not harming and hurting any life form. We seek forgiveness of any harm caused to any life forms present in earth, water, fire, air, vegetation too, by three “Yog” of thought, speech and action is a yearly practice as “Samvatsari Pratikraman” for almost all Jains. Forgiveness is also seeked of “Karma” our soul engages by three “Karan” as engaging self in doing the act, encouraging or supporting one in doing the act and appreciating the act by the thoughts, speech and action. Jains practice “Bhaav Yagna” that purifies the soul knowledgeable that is capable of elevating self and others and to look inwards and become “Antarmukhi”. “Chaturvidh”, compromising of Sadhu, Sadhviji, Shravak and Shravika with women being bestowed with equal rights to perform all the rituals, evidently displays Gender equality. Remarkable to note that the “AnjanaShalalkha” ritual during the “Pranpratishtha” of the Idols is performed by Shravika. Systematic, competent and efficient coordination of all temple activities and “VaiyaVaccha” of Sadhus and Sadhviji, is a very distinctive feature of “Sangh” compromising of Shravak and Shravika, taking care of the “Vihar” and all the needs of the Sadhus and Sadhviji who are always on the move by foot.

“Moksh Marg” laid by “Tirthankar Mahavir Swami when practiced after paying our obeisance to the “Arihant”, “Siddha”, “Acharya”, “Upadhyay” and “Sadhu” leads to Nirvana. “MokshMarg” is Samayak Purusharth” of engaging in discarding “Mithyatavva”, ‘Pramad’, “Kashay” and “Avirti” with “Samayakattva” by observing the ‘Vraat’, “Niyaam”, “Samyaktaap”, “Munidharam” and “Sanyam”. “Achar Suddhi” leads to “Nirjara” of the Karma accumulated by the soul due to “Raag” and “Dwesh”, by the activities of mind, speech and action. “Karmashay” this leads to “Kewalgyaan”, the complete, absolute and pure knowledge. Religious practices are “Lokkuttar” focussing on becoming “Akriya vadi” and attain “Samyaktavva”. The “Adhyatmic” progress of reaching the fourteenth “Gunastanak” of becoming “Ayogi Kewali” where the soul reaches the state of “Anant Gyan”, “AnantDarshan” and becomes “Siddh Buddh” is attained my many and can be attained by us by “Samayak Purusharth” is the faith the Guru instils in us. Shravak and Shravika also lead a pious life, with constant reminder of the philosophy of “Muhpatti Bol”, “Leshya”, “Shalya”, “Samvay”, “Samiti”, “Gupti”, “Bhavana” as guidelines for their daily living and practices. Soul achieves state free from all happiness, miseries, sufferings, pain and desire bringing an end to all mental, emotional and Physical anguishes, state of “AnantSukh”, “AnantSwarup”, the “Buddh” state. Salvation.

“Anekantavada”, the doctrine of non-absolutism, that encourages acceptance of relativism and pluralism. The unique and poignant doctrine states that objects have infinite modes of existence

and qualities, and cannot be completely grasped in all aspects and manifestations by finite human perception. We can relate this doctrine with present day theories of “Lateral Thinking” professed by Edward De Bono widely practiced in corporates as efficient problem solving and decision-making tool.

Essence of the Jaina Philosophy:

The main principle as said earlier is rooted in the concept of non violence. This principle has to be practised not only to save one's soul but also the entire humankind. Ahimsa is certainly the heart of Jain Ethos. Living without harming others, regulation in dietary habits, equal value and weightage for all living souls, equal right to live, formulation an ethical system are all universally accepted principles of Jainism. The spiritual development and elevation irrespective of caste, creed, community, ethnicity, race and many more have promoted ethical values like no right to harm and injure and treat all beings whether with five or lesser senses as equal. Don't exclude anybody. In the process there is also a call to refrain from physical, mental, verbal harm to any creature. One should also commit oneself to asking/encouraging/assenting to the request ,

Opinion, proper direction of another. All life is bound together by mutual support, interdependence healthy networking among the humankind. No one can neglect the presence of the elements of nature like earth, air, fire, water, ether, flora and fauna and animals. It does not permit anyone to hold anybody in captivity, starvation and inflict cruelty.

Human being is a congruence of contrasting qualities. Both violence and non violence is inherent in the mind. mind works in both the directions. While One set dictates anger the other one counsels patience and puts a brake on the negative emotion. Human being exhibits both instigating and refraining tendencies. Good and evil persist alongside each other. A peace loving human being will awaken the good and put the evil to sleep. The Dhammapada supplements these thoughts when it speaks of Addha Purusha and Annaddha Purusha. Manusmriti complements this thought in explaining about Indriya Nirodhana.

Significance of Ahimsa in Jainism: The word Ahimsa is of universal application and value. It is accepted across religions and the concept underlying this significant meaning is shared by all. However it is appropriate to say that this word was given a place of significance in Jainism in the 5th and 6th century. Foreign travellers who visited our country have documented in their travelogues that the Jain Monks who were spiritually elevated practised non Violence in the truest sense of the word. The Jain thought takes into account the biodiversity concept and has addressed issues concerning Ecology which has become a prominent topic of today's Scientific Discourse. They have announced an universal message that destroying another is destroying oneself. The message is a wakeup call and is very forceful in its import.

Jainism encourages rational thinking when it speaks about the fundamental concept of Triratnas or the three gems Samyak darshana, Samyak Jnana and Samyak charitra.

The doctrine of Pluralism or ananekantavada is an idea which is original to Jainism. It is rooted in Ahimsa. The non absolute principles tend towards relativity and coexistence. This creates universal peace and fraternity concept which is the need of the hour. A comprehensive viewpoint of avoidance of opposition emerges from this. The solution to reduce violence lies in consideration of seemingly opposed traits in humankind.

CONCLUSION:

Individual ethics are strongly advocated in Jainism. The training in six necessary duties are a part of educating an individual to understand fraternity, dignity, humanity and many more such qualities. The Jaina prescriptions are very close to Gandhian thought and are very innovative towards attaining universal happiness. Acharya Tulasi one of the very prominent Jain religious preacher of recent times says that it is not democracy we need but it is paxocracy which has complete faith in non violence. There is a need to transform the society across parameters like Sef, economy, political mechanism, cultural orientation, social order and the like. This will lead to a healthy and non violent society. The embryo of consciousness on non violence progresses to universal consciousness. There will be a conscious effort to march from microcosm to macrocosm. They also become the key parameters to establish and maintain peace.

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