



Jaina's Ideology: A Close Affinity with the Environment

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ABSTRACT

India, country of the origin of seers and saints laid the foundation of the concept of spirituality. The treasure of Indian culture which has been gifted to us from the scriptural texts like Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas is impeccable. Indian Philosophy one of the branch of philosophy discipline elaborately explains the goal of human existence on this earth. It also emphasizes on the fact that human beings are closely associated with the cosmic reality thus guiding us about our roles and responsibilities towards the cosmic world. Our birth on this earth is a precious gift given to us, thus it is imperative to act responsibly as we are accountable for any damage that is caused to this world. The biggest threat to the contemporary society is ecological disequilibrium, the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic is the most unfortunate consequence of this disequilibrium. The COVID 19 outbreak projected on the requirement to re-practice the teachings and principles practiced in ancient India. In this paper my aim is to revisit the teachings of one of the most significant Indian school of thought Jainism. I intend to highlight a close affinity of human beings with the environment as expounded in the teachings of Jainism.

Keywords- Environment, Jainism, Covid 19, Sustainability, Sayadvada

Introduction

The present crisis situation of pandemic is the time when existence on the cosmos is a feeling of big achievement by human beings. One of the major lesson we humans have learnt from this pandemic is the value of healthy environment. We humans are part of this striking cosmic reality. Many a times we fail to understand the close bonding that exists between us and the cosmos. The close relationship between nature and humans have been a significant topic of discussion since inception. Even from religious perspective numerous attempts have been made to explain the close association between the cosmos and human beings. I intend to showcase how environment has been the very essence of human existence and how this affinity has been explained in Jainism school of thought.

Jaina's ideology divides the reality into two kinds, living and non-living. Reality according to Jainism is defined to have existence which undergoes numerous changes and modifications. All living beings consist of Jiva, soul or spirit, no matter how imperfect its body may be, it means the conscious spirit. Ajiva consists of the in animated objects, it means the unconscious non-spirit. Ajiva includes not only matter which is called 'Pudgala', but also space, time, motion and rest. The five non-living entities together with the living being, total six are aspects of reality in Jainism. They are known as six universal entities, or substances or realities. These six entities of the universe are eternal but continuously undergo countless changes. During the changes nothing is lost or destroyed. Everything is recycled into another form.

Jiva is generally the same as the Atman or the Purusa in other pluralistic schools with this important difference that it is identified with life of which consciousness is said to be the essence. The Jivas are divided into those who are liberated (mukta) and those who are bound (baddha). The bound souls are further divided into mobile and immobile. The immobile live in the atoms of earth, water, fire and air and in the vegetable kingdom and have only one sense that of touch. The mobile souls are again classified as those who have two senses (e.g. worms), three senses (e.g. ants), four senses (e.g. wasps, bees) and five senses (e.g. Higher animals and men). By categorizing conscious beings into mobile and immobile parts one can understand the how Jain philosophy is closely connected to the environment. Thus giving rise to the belief of preserving all Jiva's, as they are pluralistic in nature. Consciousness is regarded as the essence of the soul. Every Jiva from the lowest to the highest possesses consciousness. The degree of consciousness may vary according to the obstacles of karma.

Thus according to Jaina ideology all Jiva's whether of one sense organ or five senses organ needs to be protected. For them it is the duty of each one to preserve and secure everything that is part of this cosmic reality. To strengthen this position Jaina lay the foundation of five-fold spiritual discipline. These principles are known as the great vows of Jainism. These vows are

- (1) Ahimsa: It non-injury in thought, word and deed, thus not harming any creature and helping all creatures in case of need.
- (2) Satya: It means holding to truth in thought, word and deed. Always speaking truth and following the part of truthfulness.
- (3) Asteya: It means not to steal, not to take anything to which one is not entitled.
- (4) Brahmacharya: abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech or action.
- (5) Aparigraha or renunciation by thought, word and deed.

These five ethical paths have been reflected in Gandhian ideology. Mahatma Gandhi was a strict followers for these vows of Jainism and he tried to practically implement these ethical principles in one's own life. Though the pragmatic approach Gandhi emphasized on the importance of

implementing these ethical principles in one's own life.

The physical environment plays a key role in the Jaina worldview, which makes a direct connection between its cosmology and its ethical system. From the earliest extant text of the tradition, one learns that Jaina monks and nuns were keen observers of the elements and the living beings of the natural world. Jaina cosmology proclaims that all aspects of the surrounding world have feelings and consciousness. The earth feels and responds in kind to human presence. The earth one treads upon, the water one drinks, the air one inhales, the chair that supports one, the light that illumines one's day—all these entities feel one through the sense of touch, though one seldom acknowledges their presence. Humans, as living, sensate, sentient beings, have been given the special task and responsibility of growing in awareness and appreciation of these other life forms and of acting accordingly. Humans have the opportunity to cultivate ethical behavior that engenders respect toward the living, breathing, conscious beings that suffuse the universe.

Thus one can say that there exists a close affinity of human being with the nature, this realization became more evident to mankind with the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic. Due to the outbreak of pandemic people realized the significance of nature, they realized how important it is to breath fresh air, enjoy chirping of birds and started valuing every piety thing that was given to us by nature but we used to take it for granted. Now since we have learned a lesson its time to pleague to save and protect our mother nature and value each and everything that is given to us as part of this cosmic reality.

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together...all things connect- Chief Seattle

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