



**A NOVEL APPROACH CONTAINED IN THE TEACHINGS OF JAINISM TOWARDS
EDUCATION WITH RELEVANCE TO MODERN INDIA**

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Abstract

Let us approach Jainism as a sound philosophy of education. New India cannot ignore this now. In this transitory world, Dharma (Truth) is the greatest prop for life. It is Dharma alone, which leads life from misery to happiness, from discord to harmony, from darkness to light, from death to immortality, from bondage to freedom and salvation. Therefore one should ever seek shelter of Dharma (Truth). People of all countries and in all terms have been yearning for two things, firstly true and perfect knowledge and secondly, True Happiness. Despite all our efforts our so-called civilization has, after so long, succeeded in securing to us only a few pebbles on the sea-shore and got for its show-case only a few snapshots of Nature's vast phenomena.

The world of today has become so fastidious that it will not credit anything unless it confirms reason. Nothing will be acceptable the truth of it cannot be verified by means of an experiment; a telescope or a microscope. A true religion, if it is to be sincerely believed, must be scientific.

The problem of problems today is how to stop the struggle between the rich and needy. The people of wealthy sections of society have plenty of food, clothing and bank balances yet they are struggling restlessly

Key Words: *Novel, Approach, Teachings Jainism, relevance, modern India*

A Novel Approach

Let us approach Jainism as a sound philosophy of education. New India cannot ignore this now. We have built our arts and sciences on the sound footing of our religion and culture. Our ancient religion and culture contain much that may satisfy modern needs, but unfortunately

we miss it while we study our old religious literature in a superficial manner. If we just looked for modern concepts in our ancient heritage, our efforts will not be rewarded.

The Path of true freedom

True freedom and dharma

In this transitory world, Dharma (Truth) is the greatest prop for life. It is Dharma alone, which leads life from misery to happiness, from discord to harmony, from darkness to light, from death to immortality, from bondage to freedom and salvation. Therefore one should ever seek shelter of Dharma (Truth).

This Dharma (Truth) is composed of three parts: (i) Right faith, (ii) Right Knowledge, (iii) Right conduct.

Right Faith

1. A True Believer of Jainism Chants “I am He, the purest and glorious spirit, all loving, all permeating, all transcending. I am embodiment of peace, bliss and beatitude. I am aloof from matter, free from bondage, void of fatigue. Birth, age and death do not reside in me, they are all the vices of a physical body. I am free. I am eternal. I am God in embryo ever-seeking, ever moving towards perfection.” It is this sort of faith which is termed as the right faith.
2. To develop this self conception of Godhood one must practice daily meditations or auto-suggestions in mornings and evenings.

Right Knowledge

1. For the wise, only that knowledge is the Right knowledge, which endears sanctity to life, establishes oneness of life, which frees it from desires, liberates it from woes and worries, gives it hope and courage, and fills it with peace and happiness.
2. This knowledge comes from the knowledge of self, self is the abode of God, it is the source of all knowledge, source of all truths, sources of all ideals, self, in fact, is the highest truth, highest purpose, highest good.

Right conduct

1. “As you sow, so shall you reap.” Good deeds give birth to good fruits, and bad deeds to bad fruits. Whatever pains and miseries, we daily meet in life, they are, after all, the fruits of our own misdeeds. To avoid them we should ever reform our deeds.
2. If we want to see a world of love and righteousness around us, we should cultivate these virtues within ourselves. Self reform is the best reform.

3. The conduct which is disliked by us, is disliked by others also, therefore we should never indulge in bad conduct.
4. Love to all, obeisance to the righteous, mercy to the poor and tolerance to the perverse are signs of good conduct.

Seven commendable ways of life

1. **Ahimsa:** All want to live and none wants to die. Therefore; the best way of life is “to live and let live.”
2. **Truthfulness:** Truth is God and God is the good of life. Good is dear to all, but only when conveyed in a sweet way. Sweet tongue is the greatest befriender in life, while harsh and abusive language is the greatest enemy. Sweet word costs nothing while it pays everything.
3. **Non-Stealing:** In the physical plane, it is wealth which is the sustainer of life. One who steals your wealth, steals your life. Thus stealing is no less a sin than Himsa. It should be forsaken in all its forms of theft or cheating, extortion or exploitation.
4. **Non-hoarding:** However valuable wealth may be as a means of sustenance, it is no cure for greed. Greed can be pacified only by contentment and not by wealth. Hoarding of wealth for greed is to deprive others of their needs.
5. **Self-Control (Brahmcharya):** A charioteer is doomed to disaster who loses control of his horses, so in the walk of life, one is sure to meet sorrow, lets loose his senses. Slavery of senses is the worst form of slavery. The conquest of senses is the best conquest.
6. **Tolerance:** This world of ours belongs to various people having different faiths, different practices, different thoughts and different languages. But all this difference is only phenomenal. It is merely an outcome to the geographical and historical influences under which we have lived. It is merely a product of the psychological and ethical view points, with which we have learned to look. Behind this vast sea of differences, there lies a fundamental unity of life, which endows us all with a similarity of purpose, similarity of feelings and similarity of expression.
7. **Purity of diet:** “Pure in diet, pure in mind.” Pure diet is a product of Ahimsa, so it breeds Ahimsa in mind. Fruits, vegetables, nuts, cereals and milk are all articles of pure food; for they are easily available from stores of the bountiful nature without doing any harm or pain to any living being. They are also the natural diet of man, for they are so consistent with his graceful nature, digestive organs and dietary habits.

Meat, egg, fish and wine have nothing in common with the above articles. They are all hideous and disgusting things. They are all products of cruelty and Himsa. They are not the natural good of man. To take them as food is a revolt against nature and religion, a revolt against conscience and God. They are all harmful to body, mind and soul. One should always abstain from taking as food.

Perfect knowledge and true happiness : People of all countries and in all terms have been yearning for two things, firstly true and perfect knowledge and secondly, True Happiness. Despite all our efforts our so-called civilization has, after so long, succeeded in securing to us only a few pebbles on the sea-shore and got for its show-case only a few snapshots of Nature's vast phenomena. As for true happiness we, the children of civilization, in spite of possessing all products of scientific advance, have seldom been able to be wholly care-free so that even the small moments of relief that we have been able to snatch, are tinged with a sub-consciousness of unhappiness.

Scientific Knowledge in Jainism

The world of today has become so fastidious that it will not credit anything unless it confirms reason. Nothing will be acceptable the truth of it cannot be verified by means of an experiment; a telescope or a microscope. A true religion, if it is to be sincerely believed, must be scientific.

The Jain point of view regarding the universe, as expounded by its great teachers, is wholly scientific. It does not believe that any outside being, however mighty, created the universe out of nothing, and will at some remote time annihilate it to nothingness. This is impossible, this view is unscientific, for nothing can be created nor anything that exists, can ever be completely destroyed.

No Personifications and Allegories

Another important difference between Jainism and other religions is that while in the former there are no misleading metaphors allegories, personifications and parables, the other religions cloud the basic truths in mysterious round about ways, they do not catch their noses from the front but from behind the necks with the result that countless people have gone astray.

No Superstitions and Rituals

Jainism does not believe in superstitions and rituals. The Jain Deities do not hold a dagger in one hand and a head separated from the trunk in another. They do not claim animal

sacrifice for their gratification and satisfaction. The Jain laymen and saints do not participate in yagyas to ward off the supposed evil effects of the planets.

Family Planning

The countries facing the problem of family planning and the increasing population realizing that man is naturally polygamous and women polyandrous. The human society will not prosper unless some sort of check is placed on them. The great rishies introduce the institution of marriage. Jain ideology lays stress not on birth-control but on self-control, Chastity of body, heart and soul.

Jainism and Socialism

The problem of problems today is how to stop the struggle between the rich and needy. The people of wealthy sections of society have plenty of food, clothing and bank balances yet they are struggling restlessly. On the other hand there are the sweating masses, toiling and milling for scanty meals. There is again a third class of men, the so called middle class people, who have got to put up the appearance of the wealthy section whereas in reality they are as poor, if not poorer than the labour class, and their condition is really miserable.

One view in this connection has been that the needy, hungry and exploited masses should openly rise up and snatch away the riches of the rich by force. The other is to vest all wealth in the state to take away the excess wealth from the rich and distributed it in accordance with the needs of the people. The present day socialism suggests that every man certain stage of his life should stop to earn more.

The life of the great Jaina Teacher Shri Mahavira shows that from his very childhood, he was extremely non-aggressive and non-acquiring disposition. For one full year before his Renunciation of the world, he was giving all his wealth and he distributed the very clothes and ornaments which he had on his body when he attained the final self-realisation, he went on without any food.

Ehe gave away all that he did not want, not because he was compelled to do so but because of his own free will and choice. The life of Shri Mahavira thus teaches us a lesson, which the modern socialism would profit by always remembering voluntarily consent for an equal distribution of wealth, his character and not merely external atmosphere should be built up in an appropriate manner.

Shri Mahavira keeping nothing for himself, reduced his necessities to their barest minimum in the words of Thomas Carlyle made his "Claim of wages a zero." It is true that the

people of this materialistic age would not be able to practice renunciation to the extent and the manner done by Shri Mahavira, but unquestionably. He is the transcendent ideal to be followed as much faithfully and closely as possible. Some amount of renunciation or Aprigraha as it is called in the Jaina Ethics should be the fundamental principle of all the socialist philosophy and the motto of the socialist should be Live and Let Live like that of Shri Vira.

Anekantvad or (Syadvad)

Anekantvade, as opposed to Anekantvad, or many sided investigation, as opposed to one sided investigation, is the characteristic feature of Jainism.

A story is told of a number of blind men eager to know an elephant. Each of them, put his hands on the different parts of his massive body. The man, who searched his round belly, contented that the animal was something like a round earthen pot, the one who slid his hands down the legs, stressed that the elephant was pillar-like, while one, who rolled his hands on the trunk, protested that the animal cannot be but something vertically suspended, long and flexible so on and so forth. A man blessed with eyes who watched this, brought the controversy to an end by revealing that an elephant is the sum total of all these different views.

While other religions stressed one or the other aspect of a question under discussion, Jainism declares that in a way each one is correct – Jainism is thus a confluence of opposites and different points of views. It does not seek to mollify or antagonize other religions but reconciles all the different faiths prevalent in the world.

In Jainism, God, an Emancipated Soul, is revealed to be residing at the highest regions of the universe, called Sidhshilla. Also there are many souls being endowed with Omniscience, their knowledge does not differ nor the knowledge of one supplements that of another. So that there are many Gods as well as One, being one or the same in attributes. Souls again being regarded as a repository of all knowledge and its number in the universe being infinite, just as an earthen pot is full of water, He may be regarded as all pervading as well as omniscient.

The old conflict between Dualism and Monism may also be pacified by saying that God is one from the point of view of Essence, from the view point of being perfect, pure statushood. All-knowing, all – powerful, All-happy etc. but from the point of view of manifestation He is not only many but infinite.

Thus in the Jain Conception of Godhood all the different characteristics attributed to God by different religions, find their reconciliation.

Fate is not a thing of permanent character, it is subject to change according to our changing will and active effort which is at the bottom of the vast diversity of fates of different people as well as at the bottom of the fate of one and the same individual. In short freedom of will and fate both are the dominating principles of life.

Consider another and a simpler instance, one man says, "I am mortal." Another man says, "I am immortal."

These are two diagonally opposite statements between which there seems to be no common ground. Can these statements be reconciled? Jainism says, 'yes.' One who says that he is mortal is emphasizing the phenomena of birth and death of the body while the other who says that he is immortal is thinking of the imperishable nature of soul.

Today, liberty of thought and speech is increasingly getting crippled in a subtle manner. Tendentious propaganda not only conceals but also perverts the apparent facts, and the world is put on a wrong track. This means that the thinking man has to keep himself vigilant, understand the limitations of his knowledge and thus learn to respect the view point of others, as laid down by Nayavada and Syadvad. Let us not lose faith in man as man, and let us learn to respect each other as man. We must see that man lives under healthy and progressive conditions as a world-citizen. The basic principles of Jainism (such as Ahimsa, Anekanta and Aparigraha), if correctly understood and earnestly put into practice can make one a worthy citizen of the world, which is considered to be the best aim of education with relevance to Modern India.

The Synthesis that is the Jainism

India has a synthetic genius. We do not believe in compartmentalism so, in Syadvad of Jainism, we find many things in one. Jainism believes that great men or prophets see the truth. They define and explain truth in different ways. The truth is always there. It is eternal. It is truth that creates prophets and not that prophets create truth.

JAINISM AND TRUE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

True education

Jainism believes in true education which is the light of life. There can be no darkness of self-interest around true education. They truly educated young man fights not for his own needs but for the needs of the public, not for his own honour and prestige but for the honour and prestige of the whole nation.

Importance of High Thoughts

The honour of man lies in carrying the torch-light of high thoughts. Nothing great can be achieved only by the power of industry and strength. Bullocks and asses are certainly stronger than man. But do you not know that they have to be yoked and driven to work? Therefore they are called animals.

Aim of education

Education does not mean merely reading of difficult and voluminous books, or getting high university degrees. Real education means development of the soul, development of life and development of society and of the whole humanity.

Scholarship

Scholarship does not come by reading voluminous books. It comes through the understanding and realization of life though it is a rare achievement.

Purpose of education

Jainism advocates that true education should liberate the scholar from mundane passions, superstitions and obsolete traditions and beliefs. The true purpose of education is to enable the scholar to think independently for the good of the whole of mankind.

True Learning

True learning trains you in the art of deriving real pleasure of life. True pleasure of life lies in performing one's duty in the real spirit. True pleasure of life means working not as a slave but as a master. True education should train you not to escape and run away from the adverse situations of life but to face them and mould them in your favour.

Knowledge and Ignorance

Today man has woven around him, like the silk-worm, a net work of ignorance from which he cannot liberate himself.

Reward of Science

Mankind of today is playing with death. It is treading on fire. It is applying all its intelligence, all its powers and all its talents in destroying itself. Man has discovered all the secrets of nature, but what has he gained? Nothing but poison, nothing but means of death.

Test of education

The test of the educated man is whether he has become man in real sense. Has he risen higher in his moral character and conduct? Has he been able to change his wrong and insular views? Has he made social life around him more orderly and disciplined? Has he acquired courage and confidence enough to stand against evil to the very end?

Prudent, food and the greatest fool

What is the difference between the foolish and the prudent? The prudent would first think and then act. But the fool would first act and then think, and finding the results adverse, he would repent.

Man and animal

Thoughtfulness is humanity and thoughtlessness is animal hood. Thought is the only thing that differentiates man from the animal.

So it is concluded that approach Jainism as a sound philosophy of education. New India cannot ignore this now. We have built our arts and sciences on the sound footing of our religion and culture. Our ancient religion and culture contain much that may satisfy modern needs.

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