Jainism: The Need in Context of Education for Modern Youth

Kapil1, Dr. Premlata Joshi2, Kamlesh3

1Research Scholar, Dakshin Bharat Hindi Parchar Sabha (India)
2Principal, Woman Education College, Jhonju Kalan, Charkhi Dadri, Haryana (India)
3Research Scholar, Dakshin Bharat Hindi Parchar Sabha (India)

Abstract

Jain scriptures offer extensive guidance on educational techniques to achieve full knowledge and awareness. Jain educational techniques are designed to assist the practitioner to remain apart from clinging and hatred thereby liberating from karmic bondages through the Ratnatraya: right perception, right knowledge and right conduct. Educational methods in Jainism aim at taking the soul to status of complete freedom from bondages. Great emphasis is placed on the control of internal thoughts, as they influence the behavior, actions and goals. It prescribes many mindful reflections or contemplations to help in this process.

Keywords: Jainism, Educational Context of Jainism, Doctrines for Modern Youth.

Introduction

With 4.2 million followers, Jainism is among the smallest of the major world religions. Jains live throughout India. Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat have the largest Jain populations among Indian states. Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Bundelkhand and Madhya Pradesh have relatively large Jain populations. There is a large following in Punjab, especially in Ludhiana and Patiala, and there used to be many Jains in Lahore (Punjab's historic capital) and other cities before the Partition of 1947, after which many fled to India. There are many Jain communities in different parts of India and around the world.

Outside India, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Kenya have large Jain communities. The first Jain temple to be built outside India was constructed and consecrated in the 1960s in Mombasa, Kenya by the local Gujarati Jain community, although Jainism in the West mostly came about after the Oswal and Jain diaspora spread to the West in the late 1970s and 1980s. Jainism is presently a strong faith in the United States, and several dozen Jain temples have been built there, primarily by the Gujarati community. American Jains accommodates all the sects. Small Jain communities exist in Nepal, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Fiji, and Suriname. In Belgium, the very successful Indian diamond community in Antwerp, almost all of whom are Jain, opened the largest Jain temple outside India in 2010, to strengthen Jain values in and across Western Europe.

The Educational Doctrines for Modern Youth:

Anēkāntavāda

One of the most important and fundamental doctrines of Jainism is Anēkāntavāda. It refers to the principles of pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints, the notion that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth.

Jains contrast all attempts to proclaim absolute truth with adhigajanyāyah, which can be illustrated through the parable of the "blind men and an elephant". In this story, each blind man felt a different part of an elephant (trunk, leg, ear, etc.). All the men claimed to understand and explain the true appearance of the elephant, but could only partly succeed, due to their limited perspectives. This principle is more formally stated by observing that objects are infinite in their qualities and modes of existence, so they cannot be
completely grasped in all aspects and manifestations by finite human perception. According to the Jains, only the Kevalis—omniscient beings—can comprehend objects in all aspects and manifestations; others are only capable of partial knowledge. According to the doctrine, no single, specific, human view can claim to represent absolute truth.

Anekāntavāda encourages its adherents to consider the views and beliefs of their rivals and opposing parties. Proponents of anekāntavāda apply this principle to religion and philosophy, reminding themselves that any religion or philosophy—even Jainism—which clings too dogmatically to its own tenets, is committing an error based on its limited point of view. The principle of anekāntavāda also influenced Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to adopt principles of religious tolerance, ahimsā and satyagraha.

**Syādvāda**

Syādvāda is the theory of conditioned predication, which provides an expression to anekānta by recommending that the epithet Syād be prefixed to every phrase or expression. Syādvāda is not only an extension of anekānta ontology, but a separate system of logic capable of standing on its own. The Sanskrit etymological root of the term syād is "perhaps" or "maybe", but in the context of syādvāda, it means "in some ways" or "from a perspective". As reality is complex, no single proposition can express the nature of reality fully. Thus the term "syād" should be prefixed before each proposition giving it a conditional point of view and thus removing any dogmatism in the statement. Since it ensures that each statement is expressed from seven different conditional and relative viewpoints or propositions, syādvāda is known as saptabhāṅgīnāya or the theory of seven conditioned predications. These seven propositions, also known as saptabhāṅgi, are:

1. syād-asti—in some ways, it is,
2. syād-nāsti—in some ways, it is not,
3. syād-asti-nāsti—in some ways, it is, and it is not,
4. syād-asti-avaktavyaḥ—in some ways, it is, and it is indescribable,
5. syād-nāsti-avaktavyaḥ—in some ways, it is not, and it is indescribable,
6. syād-asti-nāsti-avaktavyaḥ—in some ways, it is, it is not, and it is indescribable,
7. Syād-avaktavyaḥ—in some ways, it is indescribable.

Each of these seven propositions examines the complex and multifaceted nature of reality from a relative point of view of time, space, substance and mode. To ignore the complexity of reality is to commit the fallacy of dogmatism.

**Nayavāda**

Nayavāda is the theory of partial standpoints or viewpoints. Nayavāda is a compound of two Sanskrit words—naya ("partial viewpoint") and vāda ("school of thought or debate"). It is used to arrive at a certain inference from a point of view. An object has infinite aspects to it, but when we describe an object in practice, we speak of only relevant aspects and ignore irrelevant ones. This does not deny the other attributes, qualities, modes and other aspects; they are just irrelevant from a particular perspective. Authors like Natubhai Shah explain nayavāda with the example of a car; for instance, when we talk of a "blue BMW" we are simply considering the color and make of the car. However, our statement does not imply that the car is devoid of other attributes like engine type, cylinders, speed, price and the like. This particular viewpoint is called a naya or a partial viewpoint. As a type of critical philosophy, nayavāda holds that all philosophical disputes arise out of confusion of standpoints, and the standpoints we adopt are, although we may not realize it, "the outcome of purposes that we may pursue". While operating within the limits of language and seeing the complex nature of reality, Māhāvīra used the language of nayas. Naya, being a partial expression of truth, enables us to comprehend reality part by part.

**Soul and karma**

According to Jains, all souls are intrinsically pure in their inherent and ideal state, possessing the qualities of infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite bliss and infinite energy. However, in contemporary experience, these qualities are found to be defiled and obstructed, on account of the association of these souls with karma. The soul has been associated with karma in this way throughout an eternity of beginning less time. This bondage of the soul is explained in the Jain texts by analogy with gold ore, which—in its natural state—is always found unrefined of admixture with impurities. Similarly, the ideally pure state of the soul has always been overlaid with the impurities of karma. This analogy with gold ore is also taken one step further: the purification of the soul can be achieved if the proper methods of refining are applied. Over the centuries, Jain monks have developed a large and sophisticated corpus of literature describing the nature of the soul, various
aspects of the working of karma, and the ways and means of attaining moksa. A Jain Philosopher, Virchand Gandhi quoted on karma and karmic bondage "All non liberated souls when pass from one life to another it carries with itself the Karmic body which is invisible and subtle. This Karmic body depending on the karma energies it carries, exhibits the occult powers. It first attracts the material particles to form the physical body. The senses, speech and mind are formed according to the ability of the soul bonded by Karmic connections. It may be one sense organism to five sense organism with mind or without mind. Even one can be born as hellish beings or celestial beings. Mind includes desires, emotions, intelligence, thinking etc. According to Jains the soul in pure form has infiniteness in terms of its knowledge and power. These faculties are obstructed for its exhibition due to Karmic bondage." According to Indologist Robert J. Zydenbos, karma is a system of natural laws, where actions that carry moral significance are considered to cause certain consequences in the same way as physical actions. When one holds an apple and then lets it go, the apple will fall. There is no judge, and no moral judgment involved, since this is a mechanical consequence of the physical action. Jain teachers speak of many ways in which the karmic matter can be attracted to the soul. Even giving silent assent or endorsement to acts of violence from far away has karmic consequences for the soul. Hence, the scriptures advise carefulness in actions, awareness of the world, and purity in thoughts as means to avoid the burden of karma.

Cosmology

Jain cosmology is the description of the shape and functioning of the physical and metaphysical Universe (loka) and its constituents (such as living, matter, space, time etc.) according to Jainism, which includes the canonical Jain texts, commentaries and the writings of the Jain philosopher-monks. Jainism does not support belief in a creator deity. According to Jain doctrine, the universe and its constituents—soul, matter, space, time, and principles of motion—have always existed.

The early Jains contemplated the nature of the earth and universe and developed a detailed hypothesis on the various aspects of astronomy and cosmology. According to the Jain texts, the universe is divided into 3 parts:

- Urdhva Loka – the realms of the demi-gods or heavens
- Madhya Loka – the realms of the humans, animals and plants
- Adho Loka – the realms of the hellish beings or the infernal regions

According to Jain cosmology, the universe is made up of six dravya (substances): sentient beings or souls (jīva), non-sentient substance or matter (pudgala), principle of motion (dharma), the principle of rest (adharma), space (ākāśa) and time (kāla). The latter five are united as the ajiva (the non-living).

According to Jainism, time is beginningless and eternal. The Kālacakra, the cosmic wheel of time, rotates ceaselessly. The wheel of time is divided into two half-rotations, Utsarpinī or ascending time cycle and Avasarpinī, the descending time cycle, occurring continuously after each other. Utsarpinī is a period of progressive prosperity and happiness where the happiness at an increasing scale, while Avasarpinī is a period of increasing sorrow and immorality. Currently, the time cycle is in avasarpinī or descending phase with the following epochs.

During the first and last two Aras, the knowledge and practice of dharma lapse among humanity and then reappear through the teachings of enlightened humans, those who have reached liberation from their karma, during the third and fourth Aras. Traditionally, in our universe and in this time cycle, Rishabha is regarded as the first to realize the truth. Mahavira (Vardhamana) was the last (24th) Tirthankara to attain enlightenment.

Prominent Figures

Salakapurusas (illustrious or worthy persons), also known as trisastisalakapurusa (63 illustrious persons) are 63 illustrious beings who appear during each half-time cycle. The Jain universal or legendary history is a compilation of the deeds of these illustrious persons.[86] They are 24 Tirthankaras (ford makers), 12 Cakravartīs (universal monarchs, emperors of six continents), 9 Baladevas (gentle heroes), 9 Vāsudevas (violent heroes) and 9 Prativāsudevas (anti-heroes).

Tirthankaras

Tirthāṅkara (Sanskrit: "ford-Maker", Tamil: Kaṭavul) is a human being who helps in achieving liberation and enlightenment as an "Arihant" by destroying all
of their soul constraining (ghati) karmas, became a role-model and leader for those seeking spiritual guidance. Tirthankaras revitalize Jain Society by organization of fourfold Jain Order consisting of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.

Jaina tradition identifies Rishabha (also known as Adinath) as the first tirthankar of this declining (avasarpini) time cycle (kalachakra). The 24th, and last Tirthankar is Mahavira, who lived from 599 to 527 BCE. The 23rd Tirthankar, Parshva, lived from 877 to 777 BCE. The last two Tirthankaras, Parshva and Mahavira, are historical figures whose existence is recorded.

Chakravarti

A Chakravarti (Universal Monarch) is the emperor of the world, lord of the material realm. Though he possesses worldly power, he often finds his ambitions dwarfed by the enormity of the cosmos. Jain purunas give a list of 12 Chakravartins who flourished in this descending time cycle. Golden in complexion, they all belonged to Kasyapa gotra. One of the greatest Chakravartis mentioned in Jain scriptures is Bharata in whose memory India came to be known as “Bharata-varsha”.

Baladeva, Vāsudeva and Prativāsudeva

There are 9 sets of Baladevas, Vāsudevas and Prativāsudevas. Certain Digambara texts refer to them as Balabhadra, Narayana and Pratinarayana respectively. The origin of this list of brothers can be traced back to the Jinacaritra (lives of the Jinas) by Bhadrabahu swami (3-4th century BCE). Baladevas are non-violent heroes. Vāsudevas are violent heroes and Prativāsudevas can be termed as villains. It is the Vāsudeva who ultimately kills Prativāsudeva. Out of nine Baladevas, eight attain liberation and the last one goes to heaven. On the other hand, Vāsudevas go to hell on account of their violent exploits, even if they were is to uphold righteousness.

Conclusion

The educational methods of Jainism help the youth to make them a good human being. The Jain sangha is divided into two major sects, Digambara and Svetambara. The differences in belief between the two sects are minor and relatively obscure. Digambara monks do not wear clothes because they believe clothes, like other possessions, increase dependency and desire for material things, and desire for anything ultimately leads to sorrow. This also restricts full monastic life (and therefore moksa) to males as Digambaras do not permit women to be nude; female renunciates wear white and are referred to as Aryikas. Svetambara monastics, on the other hand, wear white seamless clothes for practical reasons, and believe there is nothing in the scriptures that condemns wearing clothes. Women are accorded full status as renunciates and are often called sadhvi, the feminine of the term often used for male munis, sadhu. Svetambars believe women may attain liberation and that Mallinath, a Tirthankara, was female. The earliest record of Digambara beliefs is contained in the Prakrit Suttapahuda of the Digambara mendicant Kundakunda (c. 2nd century AD). Digambaras believe that Mahavira remained unmarried, whereas Svetambars believe Mahavira married a woman who bore him a daughter. The two sects also differ on the origin of Mata Trishala, Mahavira’s mother. Digambaras believe that only the first five lines are formally part of the Namokar Mantra (the main Jain prayer), whereas Svetambars believe all nine form the mantra.

References


