

An Epitome of Jainism

DIGEST

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The task of philosophers is to find law, order and reason in what at first sight seems accidental, capricious and meaningless. The early philosophers tried to solve the whole problem of the universe at a stroke and find some one principle or unitary method which would account for everything. But it soon became obvious that the principle and the problem of universe are not so easy to be solved.

Generally speaking, the idea of the universe is to be explained in terms of three things, viz., self which is subject, not-self which is object and the unity which is presupposed in the difference of self and not-self and in and through which they act and react on each other. Strictly speaking, there is one subject and one object for us ; for, in opposition to the subject, the totality of objects constitute one world, and in opposition to the object, all experiences of the subject are merged in the unity of one self. The third term, which embraces them both, which is higher than either, is the idea of an Absolute Unity transcending all opposition of the finitude. Some have translated the idea of Absolute Unity as God,—the First Cause or the First Creator. But this is open to serious objections, first, because the result it gives is purely negative, second, because the so-called first cause would not be really absolute, and, third, because this would raise the problem of inactivity of God before the creation of the universe. The Jainas, therefore, hold that the universe exists from eternity and that they cannot conceive of a time when it did not exist.

The theory of self-existence of the universe apart, there are two more theories in this field, viz., the theory of evolution and the theory of creation by some external agency. The former theory commits the fallacy of composition in so far as it attributes to the whole something which is true only of the parts. A given man, a given nation, a given continent have their general finite histories, but we have only to extend

our vision to find a permanent totality made up of transcendent individuals in every stage of change. When we so extend our vision, we are not warranted in saying, as Spencer does, that "there is an alternation of evolution and dissolution in totality of things". We have really no evidence to show that the universe is coming to an end, as we have no evidence to show that it is finite. In the Jaina view, the universe as a whole is in-create, eternal, self-existent and ever-permanent ; but viewed from the standpoint of its interrelated parts, it is transitory, phenomenal and evanescent. The assertion of self-existence is simply an indirect denial of the third theory above, viz., the theory of creation by an extra-cosmic God, which has been propounded by all the theistic systems of philosophy.

According to the Jainas, the universe as a whole or in parts is but permutations and combinations of four primary rudiments, viz., time, space, soul and matter. These rudiments are resolvable into minutest parts which do not admit of any further analysis. This is corroborated by modern scientific research according to which the universe is nothing more than an everchanging permutations and combinations of atoms, molecules and cells forming the character and composition of the same. But whereas modern science can say *how* things happen, it does not know *why* they happen. Here the Jainas have given their solution. We have already said that the four primary rudiments of the universe are resolvable into the minutest of the minute parts. Now these ultimate rudiments, having nothing for their material cause, stand by themselves as unresolvable units. These units are endowed with infinite power by virtue of which they are capable of being developed in innumerable ways through the process of permutations and combinations of these four original ingredients which form the time, character, composition and make-up of the universe. The diversity of names and forms is due to five other factors, viz., time (*kāla*), environment (*swabhāva*), destiny (*niyati*), action (*karma*) and effort (*udhyoga*). Unlike the Western philosophers like J. S. Mill who hold that the patient is the agent, the Jainas make a distinction between a determining cause and a substantial cause. And the distinction is important. For instance, the molecule of ammonium cyanate is composed of N_2 , O_2 , C_2 , and H_4 and the molecule of urea is also composed of the same number of the same atoms. And yet the two molecules are different. While science cannot explain this, the Jainas would say, this difference is due to the intervention of the determining cause. The five items noted above, viz., time, environment, etc., are the determining causes while the four primary rudiments are the substantial causes. This in brief is the Jaina doctrine of Causation. The process of differentiation which science fails to explain is explicable

by reference to the law of *karma*. Other determinant conditions being there, it is the continuity of *karma* that explains why the properties of a molecule of urea and of cyanate of ammonia are different, though they are composed of the same number of chemical elements and it is also this continuity of *karma* that accounts for the development of the diverse forms of a mollusc, a frog and a mammal, though arising from apparently identical primitive cells.

In the Jaina view, therefore, there is no room left for an iron-willed capricious God. According to this view, a correct understanding of the true principles of causality and phenomenology, as indicated by the Victors (*Jinas*) dispenses with the necessity of any divine intervention in the affairs of the world. This does not make the Jainas atheists. They do believe in a God, but not necessarily an Almighty Ruler. They believe and make us feel that we are independent, autonomous individuals, who can carve out our own paths of liberation and emancipation. God to them is the spiritual energy present all over the universe (Spencer's 'primal energy') that gives materiality, mentality and substantiality to all things and beings.

The soul which, when liberated, attains godhood is, according to the Jainas, an eternal, self-existent reality. This view clashes with the sort of view held from Carvaka downwards to Earnest Haeckel who attribute mortality to it. Another significant Jaina contribution is the view that there is no hard opposition between soul (*jiva*) and matter (*ajiva*) as would render them incapable of being united, and this clashes with the view that holds these two entirely separate and incapable of coming together. According to the Jainas, the attributes of matter are not absolutely contradictory to the attributes of soul. Matter is only matter in relation to what is not matter.

A question may be raised. Soul is a self-existent reality from all eternity whereas *karma* is a phenomenon in time. How then the pure, free soul came to be fettered? The Jaina philosophy does not try to answer such futile questions. The fact is there and that's all. The Jainas hold that both the soul and the *karma* stand to each other in relations of phenomenal conjunction, the continuity of which is without beginning (*anādi apascānupūrbī saṁyoga prabāhasaṁbandha*). The effect of *karma* is all-pervading, to be seen all over the universe, not only on the earth but also in hell, the world of gods and that of demons, the world of the goblins and that of the brutes.

It is on the *karma* phenomenology that the whole of the Jaina ethics

is based. Etymologically, *karma* means action or deed. But as philosophical terminology, it signifies not only action but the crystallised effect as well of the action in so far as it modifies the futurity of the doer. A close examination of the appearance of man, of an anthropoid ape and a bat from almost identical embryos as also the differences among children born of the same parents will make it clear as to what we mean and understand by the operation of the law of *karma*. This is in a way supported by modern investigations. Thus August Weisman writes that the characters of each of the children born of the same parents are not the result of hereditary transmission ; they are a manifestation of "those characters which were potentially contained in the structure of the germ-plasm". Obviously, the reference need be to *karma*. As Hartmann has put it, "The experience gained in one life may not be remembered in their detail in the next ; but the impressions which they produce will remain. Again and again, man passes through the wheel of transformation and changing his lower energies into higher ones until matter attracts him no longer and he becomes—what he is destined to be—a god." This belief in the ethical autonomy of man, the Jainas say, makes man thoroughly free and independent of the iron-will of any Being outside and above himself, the maker of his own Destiny.

From the law of *karma* follows a belief in *rebirth* which pervades the whole of Indian thought, irrespective of its diverse schools, and which has been echoed by the master minds of other lands, past as well as contemporary. We find it in philosophers like Plato and Pythagoras, in Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Schopenhauer and Goethe ; we find it in poets like Young, Dryden, Shelley, Wordsworth and Tennyson ; we find it repeated even by men of science. Thus Huxley writes, "None but the hasty thinkers will reject it.....like the doctrine of evolution itself, that of transmigration has its root in the world of reality."

Rebirth means taking a body, a mortal physical frame. A *jiva* may be an embodiment of intellectual, moral and spiritual essences. But the matter does not end there. What is equally important is a tendency of attraction for the appropriate physiological conditions, a suitable body where the soul may display its powers and qualities, may be for the satisfaction of desires or for the attainment of bliss or beatitude. Other systems of Indian thought talk of *karma* and rebirth, but their *karma* is imponderable (*amūrta*). The Jainas alone suggest the notion of *karma-pudgala* (matter) in which *karma* is metamorphosed into material particles which constitute the body—the *kārmaṇa śarīra*, as it is called. Thus we see that the *karma-śarīra* of a *jiva*, as explained in the Jaina philosophy, is simply a kind of organism born of its own experiences which

become materialised, as it were, into *karma-pudgala*, enveloped in which the individual soul, reducing itself into a unit of energy, passes out. Thus conceived, the human organism comes out to be the objectification in gross form of the human action-currents of will and thought. As T. H. Green has written, "The will is simply the man."

Kārmaṇa śarīra is the 'inner nature'—what Huxley calls 'character'. This must be distinguished from the *audarika śarīra* which is outer nature. In the Jaina view, the two are not essentially different. They are the same with this difference only that one manifests through the other and stands with the other in the relation of mutual intermutation. To put it differently, *kārmaṇa śarīra* is the experiential body where the effects caused by the *audarika*-body are stored up in a subtle form. The operation of the *audarika*-body leaves a permanent vestige on the *kārmaṇa*-body, just as the agitation of brain molecules leaves a permanent vestige upon the brain itself. This is *karma-pudgala*, which in its turn determines the nature of the *audarika*-body. The relation between the two turns out to be one of correlativity. Rebirth is the transmigration of the *kārmaṇa śarīra* from body to body by means of which a *jīva* attains to higher forms of evolution by its own moral will and endeavour. The Jains emphasize the operation of the free-will of the *jīva* as distinguished from fatalism. The Jains are anti-determinists.

Thus it is this *kārmaṇa śarīra* of the individual man that reincarnates or expresses itself successively in various forms through the repetition of births and deaths. When a man dies, his *kārmaṇa śarīra* is not disintegrated with the dissolution of the physical mortal frame, but passes through womb to womb in an invisible form. The *kārmaṇa śarīra* has a power of selection ; and it will select only that frame which is favourable to the manifestation of its character and the realisation of its wants and desires. Even in the vegetable world we find that a mango-seed will produce a mango sapling and a jackfruit-seed will produce a jackfruit seedling. This phenomenon of selection by the seed is not a blind adaptation to the environment but a selection by a conscious willing agent having a preferential interest in the thing selected from amidst an infinite diversity of materials and elements in the unlimited storehouse of nature. The nature and character of this conscious and deliberate selection assumes special significance in the case of man, since he has a specific goal to attain. Hence the adaptation of humanity to the circumstances is not a blind acquiescence to the forces that be, but a conscious choice of will exercised in the interest of the object, end or idea it keeps always in view.

Although the Jainas recognise man as a free agent determining his own future, they at the same time make him subservient to the outcome of his own *karma*. This, in other words, is a recognition of causality in the moral world. Man can never escape the firm grasp of the law of *karma*-causality which is sure to make him undergo the consequences of his thoughts and deeds in perfect accordance with their nature and character. The law works with a mathematical precision. There is no escape from this, howsoever you may pray or offer gifts or go on pilgrimages. But then this *karma*-causality is not as cruel as destiny ; for man by his effort can make amendment of the past deeds. The law of *karma*-causality has always been affording us ample opportunities to right the wrong, to remedy the evil, to amend the effects of the past with a view to moulding the inner nature for a higher form of evolution. This indeed is an enormous responsibility. But this freedom of man should not be misunderstood as a total freedom. Man is still subject to the laws of nature and the historical forces. He is however free to determine his own ascent or descent.

The law of *karma* plays a very important part in the Jaina scheme of the Universe. The classification of *karma* has been done with utmost accuracy and elaboration. *Karma* in the Jaina view should be understood not only to include motion, vibration, action, or 'action-currents', but also the materialised effects or vestiges in so far as they affect the fate of the actor, continuing even beyond death and modifying his subsequent career. The Jaina philosophy recognises two kinds of *karma*, viz., *ghāti karma*, i.e., action-currents of injury, and *aghāti karma*, i.e., action-currents of non-injury. *Ghāti karmas* are those that retard the unfoldment of the tripartite infinite psychical possibilities, viz., Vision, Knowledge and Freedom. *A-ghāti-karmas*, in contrast, do not do any direct harm to the unfoldment of possibilities latent in the soul ; they merely serve to determine and construct the character configuration of the manifesting media through the instrumentality of which the *jīva* works out its higher forms of evolution. It is now admitted on all hands that diversities and changes in the phenomena of nature are possible only on condition that energy of motion is capable of being stored up as energy of position. It is the kinetic release of this locked-up or potential energy in the form of the *karman* body that can account for all the possibilities of diversities and changes in the phenomena of nature. Now atoms which differently arrange themselves and combine into new forms and compounds must be previously possessed of certain *kārmic* forces having a peculiar tendency of distributing and arranging themselves in a definite order which gives constitution to the compound. This distribution and arrangement of atoms is a kind of permutation and com-

bination speaking for the particular character and configuration of the composite body it makes. The body is not only a permutation and combination of atoms, its very character changes from compression and variation of temperature, i.e., practical and other surrounding causes and conditions called the *nimittas*. It is rather interesting that no two bodies are alike either in character, behaviour or in configuration (*rati, gati, mūrti*). The broad divisions of *ghāti karma* are (1) *darśanāvaraniya* (injury to right vision), (2) *jñānāvaraniya* (injury to knowledge), (3) *mohanīya* (injury to equanimity) and (4) *antarāya* (injury to higher evolution); and those of *a-ghāti karma* are (1) *āyus* determining longevity, (2) *nāma* determining colour and configuration of the body, (3) *gotra* determining heredity and (4) *vedanīya* determining sensations of pleasure or pain. Their further divisions will lead to 158 kinds of *karma* which may be read from original text. This much about the Natural Man, man as shaped by *kārmic* forces. Now we pass on to the Moral Man, man whose life has been a constant endeavour to shake off the gilded shams of the senses so that he can attain perfection.

This leads us from metaphysics to ethics, from the theory of life to the art of life so that man can attain the goal. The *summum bonum* of life is, in the Jaina view, not the gratuitous enjoyment of the present in utter disregard of the future, as the Buddhists hold; rather it is the sacrifice of the present to the future. Of all beings, man is in possession of Free Will and hence his life is not a life of blind immediacy. It is a life controlled and guided by its meaning as a whole. Man has to become a virtuous man so that he can attain the state of unparalleled spontaneity, freedom and naturalness.

This leads to a discussion on virtue and vice. The Jainas have considered the principles on which the distinction between the two rests. In the first place, a teleological conception dominates the entire distinction and the Jainas believe that a thing or a thought has any worth as it is conducive to the realisation of some end to which it is but a means. Thus they do not believe in the intrinsic worth of any particular thought or deed, as is done by the 'commonsense' philosophers of the West. In another respect, there is a slight difference between Jainism and Western philosophy which consists in this that here virtue does not directly refer to the excellence of character as in the West, but to the conduct conducive to the realisation of *mokṣa*. The Jainas confine the terms *pāpa* and *puṇya* to the conduct itself, regarding the character which reveals itself through the conduct conducive to self-realisation as simply religious; for here religion and morality, both having the common end

in view, mingle together and are regarded as inseparable. But the question arises, why should there be *pāpa* at all ? The Jainas answer that it is the result of the abuse of an original endowment of man. But the whole resources of the original endowment are still available and the creature with this controlling agency, when raised to its highest pitch, displaces a thousand obstacles in the way of its self-realisation.

Pāpa and *punya* are the two moral categories. *Asrava* is the third. It implies the influx of the *karma*-particles into the soul. The requisite powers which galvanise the soul to draw in matters from without are (1) *mithyātva* (subreption), *avirati* (attachment), *kaṣāya* (propensions), *pramāda* (negligence) and *yoga* (functional activity of mind, speech and body). The soul being affected by these becomes transformed into a magnet as it were and attracts *karma*-matters towards it. The influx is subjective (*bhābāsrava*) as well as objective (*dravyāsrava*). The Jaina sages have classified the influx into fortytwo kinds as follows : five sense organs, four propensions, five non-keeping of vows (*avratas*), twentyfive works (*kriyās*) and three *yogas* or functional activities of mind, speech and body. Now when the *karma*-particles which have flowed into the soul coalesce with the same, it leads to *bandha* or bondage. In other words, it is the interpenetration as it were into each other's sphere of soul and *karma*-matter making both appear as self-same with each other. And like *āsrava*, this *bandha*, which is but another name for the self-sameness of the soul and *karma*-matter, is also distinguished into *bhāva* (subjective) and *dravya* (objective). Now, according to the nature and character in and through which it displays itself in the phenomena of our life and thought, this *bandha* is classified into four kinds, viz., *prakṛti bandha*, *sthiti bandha*, *anubhava bandha* and *pradeśa bandha*. When *karma*-matters coalesce, like milk and water, they seem to lose their respective differences and appear as one organic whole.

It should be pretty clear by this time that all our poverty and degradation, all our sorrows and differences, are due to *āsrava* and *bandha* caused by subreption (*mithyātva*) and the like. Fresh *āsravas* forge fresh links of bondage of the soul which is constitutionally free and potentially divine. The Jainas have therefore thought of finding a way to stop this influx. This process of purging all *karma*-matters, or renting the veil of nescience, the *jñāna-darśana-ābaraṇādi* hiding the *jīva* from the knowledge of its own real nature, begins with what is termed as *saṃvara*. This too is analysable into subjective and objective. The lines along which a *jīva* should strive and struggle for the gradual effectuation of *saṃvara* are of 57 kinds as follows : five *saṃtis*, three *guptis*, ten-fold *yati-dharma*, twelve *bhāvanās*, twenty-six *pariśahas* and five *cāritras*.

Along with the practice of *saṃvara* or arresting the influx of fresh *karma-pudgala* as stated above, a *mumukṣin jīva* (one desirous of liberation) is required to act in such a way as will help him in throwing away the already-acquired dirt of *karma* which has been subjecting him to go round and round the wheel of births and deaths. For until and unless a *jīva's* entire *karma-matter* clothing his soul works out or neutralises in a manner as would make it impossible to transform into kinetic state of its being (*udaya*), a *jīva* cannot expect to attain freedom. And the processes and activities whereby the *karma-matter* clothing the soul is worked out or their effects completely neutralised so much so that they would fall away from the constitution of the *jīva* is called *nirjarā*. The Jaina sages have classified this *nirjarā* into two kinds, viz., *akāma nirjarā* and *sakāma nirjarā*. If the *jīva* allows himself to be drifted from wave to wave surging in everflowing currents of *karma*, his destiny will no longer remain in his hands but the environment will become all in all in the making and moulding of his destiny. Therefore, instead of leaving the life to chances, the sages have devised means and methods, whereby the seeds of *karma* could be burnt. These consist of various austerities (*tapas*), internal and external. Just as fire consumes the combustible, so do the *tapas* burn up the *karmabīja* (seeds of deeds) of the *jīva* and sets him free from the turmoil of *saṃsāra*, to attain *mokṣa* (beatitude).

Unlike the other systems of thought and culture where there are various states of beatitude, the Jainas strive to attain complete deliverance of the soul from all evils and coverings—*sarvāvaraṇavimuktirmuktiḥ*. *Mokṣa* is an ideal but it isn't to remain perpetually an ideal. The ideal is to be realised. So the Jainas interpret that there are really two tendencies running parallel all through the human life and culture. One is to idealise the real and the other is to realise the ideal. These two tendencies are often at war with one another. One tends us to take the existing state of things and affairs as the best of their kind and so we must make the most of it. But the other tendency, by virtue of which they struggle to raise the world to a higher or ideal state of things, the tendency that is born of the intense dissatisfaction with the present state of things and affairs, is the tendency to realise the ideal. Complete deliverance from the veil and covering of *karma* is called *mokṣa* or emancipation from the miseries and afflictions of the world. To attain *mokṣa*, both *pāpa* and *puṇya* have to be worked out. *Karma* is possible only in the *saṃsāra*.

Some may remark that *karma* done with judiciousness and indifference to the consequences thereof might result in the emancipation of the soul. But this, the Jainas hold, does not stand to reason ; because

mokṣa is not the result of anything done or performed. *Mokṣa* is the tearing asunder of the snares of *karma* and so it is not the effect of anything preceding it as its cause. A *karma* cannot destroy *karma* ; *mokṣa* is the emancipation of the soul from the snares of *karma*. Like all other Jaina moral categories, even *mokṣa* is resolvable into subjective and objective. When the soul becomes free from the *ghāti karma*, it attains *bhāva mokṣa* ; when it becomes free from *aghāti karma*, it attains *dravya mokṣa*. And when the soul is thus liberated, it goes straight up to the *siddhaśīlā* or the region of the free and liberated. Speaking from the standpoint of noumenal *naya*, a *siddha* has no form whereof he is imperceptible by the senses, but viewed from *vyavahāra* standpoint, he has a shadowy form of a human figure which is but an embodiment of right vision, right knowledge and right conduct in and through which a *jīva* attains to a state of perfection, bliss and beatitude which is otherwise known as Omniscience and Freedom Absolute.

To any one who knows the nature of *mokṣa* and the means prescribed for it in the Jaina scriptures, there will be no difficulty in apprehending that the realisation of the self is preceded invariably by a series of conditions which must be fulfilled one after another and that perfection itself is the culmination of a graduated scale or hierarchy of moral activities which have been classified into fourteen stages and have been called the *guṇasthānas* by the Jainas. These fourteen stages may be squeezed up more generally into four only, as follows. The first stage we may roughly speak of as the stage of impulsive life, of lust and enjoyment, when the soul is quite in the dark as to its true destiny and goal, and is least removed from the animal existence; the second is the life of conscious selection and pursuit where the goal and true method of realisation are still misapprehended ; the third is the life of conscience and faith where the ends are taken not as we like, but as we ought : the fourth, the stage where all such conflicts disappear altogether and the soul shines forth in all its naturalness and omniscience. To generalise further we may say that of these four stages, the first is characterised by indiscrimination or caprice, freedom without restraint, the second and the third by voluntary and much-strained regulation at the expense of the so-called freedom, and the fourth by the coincidence, of freedom and regulation. And as each person shines forth in its true light, he becomes one with itself, as he passes from the preceding stages to those succeeding, reconciling now some warring inconsistencies, satisfying some haunting claims and getting rid of some gnawing uneasiness and thus stands forth in greater vigour, keeping clear of all enfeebling defects. To understand the principle underlying the arrangement of the *guṇasthānas*, it is necessary to bear in mind the fact that

the attainment of every end requires Right Vision, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct. Of these, Right Vision precedes Right Knowledge while Right Conduct is a characteristic of those alone who have almost perfected themselves in Vision and Wisdom. Space does not permit our recounting all these fourteen stages. We end by saying that the highest stage is *mokṣa* and one who attains it becomes a *siddha* or self-realised. In this stage, the *siddhas* do not merge themselves in an all-embracing One but remain separate as freed souls, enjoying perfect freedom from every sort of bondage caused by the *karma*-particles. The *siddhas* being omniscient and omnipotent must have Right Vision and Right Knowledge revealing them spontaneously in their Right Conduct. Such *tīrthas* (orders), breaking loose from the shackles of moral coil and *karma* and being possessed of all those divine qualities which we cannot but revere and admire most, soar high up into a kind of spiritual atmosphere where everyone shines forth as an embodiment of Faith, Truth and Culture.