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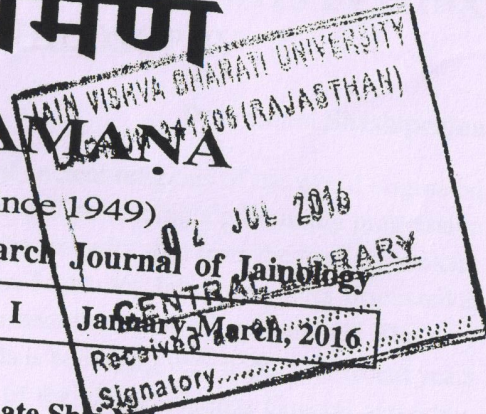
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CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN JAINA PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Samani Shashiprajna

Jainism, one of the most ancient religions of the world originated and developed on Indian soil containing a profoundly progressive social attitude. Even in the antiquity start from the first Tirthaṅkara Ṛṣabha to 24th Tirthaṅkara Mahāvīra, Jaina preceptors discussed at length, how one can protect the rights of one and all. The very concept of Human Rights is becoming very popular in recent years as per UN declaration of the United Nations General assembly. This UNDHR contains a comprehensive list of political, economic, social and cultural rights and aims at the protection of the freedom, equality and human dignity of all human beings, irrespective of their race, gender, colour, language or religion. Never before in the history had there been such a far reaching and solemn undertaking to protect each and every individual from all forms of oppression and deprivation. With this paper I intend to share my views on the Jaina concept of Human Rights and its wide perspective.

The Concept of Human Race as One

Tirthaṅkara Mahāvīra 2600 years back claimed that Human race is one i.e. *ekkā maṇussa jāi*. He never discriminated any human on the basis of his birth, colour, profession, religion, country, etc. He established the novel notion of oneness of Humanity on the basis of one's action. The criteria for a human lies in the virtue of compassion, sympathy, affection, service, and in the acts of benevolence. He propounded in *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* that man is *brahmin*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra* not by birth but by action.¹ Noble thoughts and actions (karmas) justify the human nature. He abolished the prevailing concept of considering one person as high or low on the basis of one's birth, and re-established the merit of action in the world of disparity.

The *Amṛtasya* (2.5) says : *Amṛtasyaputrāḥ* i.e. we all are the sons of the same immortal God. *Ātmavat sarvabhūteṣu* (canto 6) i.e. behold all living beings as of equal value as of oneself. The whole universe is single whole supporting trees keep suggesting for peaceful co-existence without discriminating between a man and a man on the narrow principles of class, colour, languages, province, caste or creed. Today we see there is a kind of absolute notion of sexual superiority, colour superiority, caste superiority, class, country and religious superiority which is creating reactive violence and inhuman behaviour in the name of untouchable considering the other as inferior.

The outstanding philosopher of the day Richard Rorty has discussed the cause of distinction between male and female. In male dominated society, only male are considered as human beings as they possess rationality. Women are emotional so they are not human beings. This kind of approach is threatening to the human solidarity. It is conceived both men and women nine times out of ten, are firmly convinced of the superior excellence of their own sex. There is abundant evidence on both sides. Today one man or one country fight with each other because their views vary. Views are bound to differ, because we are guided by different conditions, thoughts, modes and attitudes. Hence it is wrong to think oneself right and rest others wrong.²

Country Discrimination

We are all, whatever part of the world we come from, persuaded that our own nation is superior to all others. Seeing that each nation has its characteristics, merits and demerits, we adjust our standard of values so as to make out that the merits possessed by our nation are the really important ones, while its demerits are comparatively trivial. It is more difficult to deal with the self-esteem of man as man because we cannot argue out the matter with some non-human mind.

Caste Discrimination

The only way I know of dealing with this general human conceit is to remind ourselves that man is a brief episode in the life of a small

planet in a little corner of the universe, and that we know, other parts of the cosmos may contain beings superior to ourselves as we are to jelly fish.

In this context, Right to equality and non discrimination Act of 14, 15, 16 Article of Human Rights also claims the rights of equality of all the human beings without considering above mentioned discrimination. Mahāvīra rightly said that man is *brahmin*, *ṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *sūdra* not by one's birth, but by one's action.³ He abolished the prevailing concept of considering one person as high or low on the basis of one's birth '*no hīne no airitte*' and he initiated Harikeśabala⁴ an outcaste into his religious order. He allowed to read and study the scriptures to *sūdras*, which was prohibited in Vedic culture and religious society.

During Gandhian period our history witnessed the *sūdras* are considered as untouchables and they were prohibited to enter into temples, their children's were not allowed to admit in certain schools, they were not allowed to touch the water pot and even touch the *brahmins*. If any *sūdra* violated this, he will be punished severely. The novel-'untouchable' written by R.K. Narayan highlights the social behaviour with *sūdras*. In this novel, he writes 'They clean our dirt so they are untouchable, if it is so then each one of us are untouchable as we also clean our own dirt. Such an open-mindedness in thought is the need of the hour'.

Colour Discrimination

The central philosophy of Western Post-modern philosopher Richard Rorty is achievement of Human solidarity i.e. to consider the other person not like external, outsider or foreigner, but as one of the member among us. Rorty has given five examples how it threatened the human relationship. During IInd world war by Nazis led by Hitler claimed that only Germans have pure blue blood. All the rest are like animals, so let us kill and make the world of human. Due to this one-dimensional perspective lacs of Jews were killed in concentration camp.

Even the inhuman behaviour with black people in the west by the white people is really cruel. The whites don't consider blacks as one among them in present united states. They are deprived from certain privileges of the country, certain professions etc. The kids of black people were not admitted in the convent schools where white people's kids study. Although civil rights movement occurred against their discrimination, still a kind of segregation is prevailing. Moreover white people community stay in particular area and rich white people live in highly crowded area, they don't stay together. Even policemen too misbehave with black people. All these because of difference of skin colour, only change of perspective can do away this problem. So let us recognize that to be human doesn't require anything but only love, affection, compassions for all human brothers and feeling for sufferings of others.

Women Discrimination

Women in Jainism:

Jainism that started, maybe during the 6th century B.C. or perhaps even earlier according to some sources clearly states that all men and women are spiritually equal and that women too are capable of salvation. Both men and women may renounce the world. The story of the 19th Tirthaṅkara Mallinātha Deva, clearly shows that it is possible for a woman to become a Tirthaṅkara. In Jainism, the codes of ethics - non-violence, truth, non-stealing, purity of body and soul and non-possessiveness are common to men and women.

At the time of Mahāvīra (6th -5th century B.C.) there were no sects in Jainism. Only later, sects like Digambaras, Śvetāmbaras etc. came into existence. Digambaras insist on nudity and declare that a mendicant must renounce all property including clothes, the only exception being a small whiskbroom for brushing insects and a water gourd. They argue that Mahāvīra himself was a naked monk but say that renunciation of clothes is not mandatory. Thus, clothes came to occupy a central position in the debates on possible salvation of women. This barred women in the Digambara sect from attaining

mokṣa and this led to the formulation of the doctrine that a person could not attain *mokṣa* while having a female body. If the principle of *anekāntavāda* is taken into account, these two are only points of view and do not represent or only partially represent the Jainist doctrine.

The Yāpanīya sect combined the two practices; the male mendicants went naked and said that nudity was not necessary to achieve *mokṣa* for women. It is interesting to note that no other school except the Jainas ever questioned the inherent capacity of a woman to attain *mokṣa* in her present body and her present life. The path to *mokṣa* according to the *Tattvārthasūtra*, accepted by both the schools consists of three jewels - right view, right knowledge and right conduct. If the three are found in women too, there is no deficiency to the attainment of *mokṣa*.

Mahāvīra rightly said that man is *brahmin*, *śūdra*, *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya* not by one's birth, but by one's action.⁶ He abolished the prevailing concept of considering one person as high or low on the basis of one's birth. He initiated a slave laywomen named Candanabālā to enter into the life of nunhood and paved her way to the path of liberation. He provided the right to renounce for the women race which other Vedic, Digambara Jaina tradition itself against allotting this kind of freedom. Mahāvīra made an epoch making revolution by declaring the emancipation of women and re-established the merit of action (karma) in the world of social disparity prevailing in the name of sex, caste, country and so forth.

Mahāvīra's attitude towards women folk was very liberal. He saw the innate, good of both men and women and assigned them their due place in his order. In his religious order, sex was no barrier to attaining saint-hood and ultimately the liberation. Jaina women had similar duties to men in performing religious rites and rituals and were allowed to read and study the scriptures. Whereas in Vedic culture and religious society, women and *śūdras* were considered as inferior, debarring them from the initiation rites and wearing the sacred thread, a symbol of higher caste.⁷ Moreover women and manual

workers (*śūdras*) were not allowed to listen to sacred scriptures.⁸ Tīrthānkara Mahāvīra gave full freedom to one and all, including women and the *śūdras*, to observe common religious practices. He gave an equal opportunity to everybody, irrespective of his class, caste, or birth, or sex, to practice religion according to one's capacity. On the other hand, Mahāvīra liberally initiated the nuns in his order, which is double in number when compared with the monks. In his order, there were only 14,000 monks but there were 36,000 nuns.⁹ In the same way, the numbers of laywomen is 3,18,000, which is more than the number of 1,59,000 laymen.¹⁰ He propounded that the difference, which we see in the world is due to the past *karmas* and each soul through one's pious efforts can change one's destiny.

In this century, it is getting more and more proved that all forms of oppression against women are based on ignorance and an error. In earlier centuries, denial of opportunities to education, access to knowledge and economic empowerment deliberately done by the patriarchal system clearly kept women -almost half of the total population - within the four walls, but now the floodgates have been opened and they have all the opportunities to get educated and take up all kinds of responsibilities.

In conclusion one can say that mankind and womankind are parts of a composite humanity and are equal with no difference. It is getting proved now that the world consists of two parts, without one the other is incomplete, defective and deficient. It has been rightly said that God - neither a female nor a male, judges human actions. God never asks, "Art thou a woman or art thou a man?"

A productive partnership-based critical appreciation of the complexities in gender relation can alone reorganize the structures of the society and change the individual mindset and the institutional psyche. We should try to create a new world in the new millennium so that the present and future generations may enjoy a richer and harmonious life without making the same mistakes again.

According to my view, the very notion of the concept of Human Rights is imperfect, very limited and really violent which violates

and completely negates the rights of all the non-human beings. Certainly, the non-human bodied beings are one which I want to propagate and investigate. But I found that Jains do not usually frame the matter in terms of the rights of non-humans. But Jains speak of the moral duty and responsibility of human towards all the non-human beings. Every right has a corresponding duty, without duties there can be no rights. This duty and rules are most clearly enunciated in the cardinal Jaina principle of Non-violence. If this view of Jaina concept of equanimity is translated into reality, I think that reactive violence, unnecessary violence, intellectual violence, emotional violence at large can be avoided, which in turn can protect the rights of all forms of life and not merely human rights.

For Jainism, role of religion is to unite all through love and respect for one another. We must also work for the survival of religious diversity. Let every religion exist and flourish, let them serve the world in their own ways. Flourishing together is the secret of peace. Unity-in-diversity is the lesson of life. This spiritual unity through Surat Spiritual Declaration connects all, the whole creation in the words of Acharya Mahapragya.

In sum and substance, it can be concluded that flourishing together is the secret of peace from Jaina perspective. Unity in diversity is the lesson of life. "So let us guide ourselves and our followers not just to tolerate but to respect other persons points of views and religions, not just to exist but to co-exist, not just to hail but to help others. We must not prosper and progress at the cost of others, but sacrifice a part of ourselves for the good of others, because in the good of others lies our own, in the progress of others rests our own and in the joy of others abides our own," says Acharya Mahapragya, in his address at Surat Spiritual Declaration.

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1. *Uttarādhyanna Sūtra*, verse 12.
2. Nemichandra Shastri, *Vishva Shanti aur Jaina dharma*.
3. *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, 25.31

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4. *Ācārāṅga-sūtra*, 2.49
5. *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, 12.1
6. Ibid, 25.31
7. *Manusmṛti*, 1.103.
8. Ibid, 1.38.
9. *Kalpasūtra*, 1.134, 135.
10. Ibid, 1.136, 137.

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CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN JAINISM

Prof. Dharmchand Jain

Philosophy is the root cause of origination and development of science, because philosophy gives ideas for inventions and experiments. But there is a basic difference between science and philosophy that science has made its field of experiments on matter (pudgala) only, where as philosophy has much wider field of knowledge and formless entities like soul. If we think about the concept of consciousness according to the various branches of science, then consciousness can be defined as the activity of sense-organs, mind, brain and the cells, and when consciousness is defined according to Jaina philosophy then it is an attribute of a soul, which could not be known through the empirical or materialistic instruments.

Consciousness and soul

The word 'consciousness' is used mainly in two meanings - 1. Alertness (awareness) and 2. Feeling of livingness (cetanā). In Jainism word 'apramāda' is used in the sense of alertness and 'upayoga', 'prāṇa', 'sañjñā' for the feeling of livingness. In Jainism, a soul is considered as the ultimate source of consciousness. Consciousness is the very nature of a soul with or without body. If the soul departs from the body, sense organs and brain do not work; the body is called dead. So it is a question for the scientists that how the consciousness arises and how it vanishes? Where does it come from and where does it go? Except the Cārvāka thinkers, all the branches of Indian philosophy accept the concept of soul which is the source of consciousness. Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika philosophers mention soul as omnipresent, but they accept its consciousness limited to body. Vedānta philosophers propound omnipresent *Brahma* and living beings as its part (caitanyaṃśa). Buddhist philosophers do not accept soul as eternal entity. They accept a flow of consciousness which is called *vijñāna* or *citta*.