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Self-restraint: A Must for World Peace

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Individual and society or society and individual are interrelated. The status, conditions, power, and economy of an individual influences or is directly affected by status, conditions, power, and economy of a society. Economy is the most important factor which is connected with an individual, family, society and nation. Economics is defined as the study, how human beings allocate scarce resources to produce various commodities and how those commodities are distributed for consumption among the people in the society. Kenyes, the famous economist conceives that economy to be the best which satisfies everyone's desires. For this he has prepared a model of economic development on the basis of macro-economics. According to Ācārya Mahāprajña, this one-sided view of economic development has raised many problems. My attempt in this paper would be to discuss the problems occurring due to one-sided view of economic development and how through self-restraint these problems can be minimized if not totally mitigated. The value of self-restraint is not only spiritually beneficial but it's a panacea to build the peaceful, moral and harmonious society and nation.

Concept and problems of One-sided Economic Development

The main objective of economics is human welfare through economic progress. For that, modern economics advocates the principles of increasing wants. In support of increasing wants the following arguments are advanced¹:

1. With increase in wants, man gets maximum happiness and satisfaction.
2. Increase in wants is helpful in the development of culture and improvement in the standard of living.
3. Increase in wants leads to creation of more wealth.

4. With increase in wants economic position of the state becomes stronger, as a result of which states become militarily powerful and self-reliant in its own defense.

In order to satisfy these demands of increasing wants Keynes propounded the theory of macro-economics. Consequently, many large-scale industries were established which led to the maximization of output. On the basis of this theory, economic transformation became sharp. So, on the one hand, the establishment of large-scale industries resulted into continual development but at the same time dark side of the scenario is that it has created a great danger for environment. With the large scale cutting of forests and excessive excavation of the earth, entire balance got disturbed. The species, vitally important for the survival into the third millennium are being destroyed. Drinking water is being contaminated by pesticides and chemical wastes, dangerous gases like carbon-dioxide, etc. released by chemical industries continue to widen holes in ozone layer contributing to rapidly increasing global warming. So, today, man is living in a dangerous environment. Secondly, many social problems like corruption, economic disparity, unemployment, poverty, etc. increas. Thirdly, this development has resulted into immoral activities like unhealthy competition, greediness, adulteration, jealousy, violence, etc.

In view of all these problems the question arises what is the purpose of all these economic development? Is it only to fulfil our desires, earn profit and be happy without concern for the future generation?

In this world each person is related with four **P's** .

a) Person to Person

b) Person to People

c) Person to Planet

d) Person to Profit

From the present scenario, it is evident that man is after personal profits. He has overlooked his duties and responsibilities towards person, people and planet. Hence, it resulted into all sorts of problems mentioned above. If each person would consider the rights or shares of fellow beings, the gulf between rich and poor would not happen. Today, one crore rich people have more than ten lakh dollars (450 lakhs) while half of the population (3.50 billion) earn two dollars a day. Though our land can fulfill the needs of 11.5 billion people yet 900 million people are living without enough food. The reason is improper distribution. Why unequal distribution of income and wealth, why imbalance in the nature, etc.? The root cause of all these conditions is possessiveness.

Possession vs Possessiveness

The two words- possession and possessiveness - are to be understood. Possession is the physical property in the form of cash, assets, animal beings, etc that which is tangible. On the other hand, possessiveness is the attachment towards or craving for the possession. As long as possession is considered it is not a great problem. Man needs possession for fulfilling the basic needs such as food, water and some other requirements. But possessiveness is a kind of emotional attitude in the form of greediness, attachment towards what is being possessed and may be for what is being unpossessed. Lord Mahavira defines it as *mucchā pariggaho vutto*.² Due to this craving man's desires are soaring once a single desire is satisfied many other desires rise. That's why it is said in Jaina canons that *icchā u āgāsa samā aṇantiā*,³ that is, wants are endless like the sky.

Possessiveness and Immorality

According to Lord Mahavira possessiveness is the root cause of immorality, violence and other evil activities. It can be proved by the following references.

1. Instincts are the basic nature by which the living beings are motivated. In Jain scriptures we come across ten types of instincts

i.e. *āhāra*, *bhaya*, *maithuna*, *parigraha*, etc.⁴ Among these, one is *parigraha*. There is no mention of *hiṃsā* in these instincts. So, what I want to emphasize is that *parigraha* is the basic instinct which motivates man to commit certain violent activities.

2. Lord Mahāvīra says possessive man indulges in violence, get it done by others and also give consent to it. In this way he goes on binding karmas and falls into the cycle of miseries.⁵

That's why, Ācārya Mahāprajña has a new perspective regarding *dharma*. He says instead of saying "*ahiṃsā paramo dharmah*" we should say "*aparigrahaḥ paramo dharmah*". The most significant point which I want to focus is that it is not that always by fulfilling the desires man indulges in immoral activities. But even the unfulfillment of desires also leads to immoral actions. The following points will make it clear. There are four options -

a) Possessiveness? more desires? fulfilled? immorality ? impurity.

b) Possessiveness? more desires ? unfulfilled ?impurity in the form of jealousy, greed, etc. ? immoral actions.

c) Self-restraint? control over desires? fulfilled ? more moral? more pure.

d) Self-restraint? less desires? unfulfilled ? pure ? moral.

Generally, it is seen that those persons who have possessive nature indulges in violent actions in order to fulfill their desires. And if their desires are not fulfilled they do immoral activities due to jealousy, greed, etc. On the other hand, persons who are self-restraint have less desire and to fulfill those desires they will not involve themselves in violent activities. And if desires are not fulfilled he will not have any kind of ill or evil feelings. Thus the fulfillment and unfulfillment supported by self-restraint leads to morality and purity. This shows that possessiveness does not only create social problems but also leads to spiritual degradation while self-restraint brings morality in the society and even spiritual upgradation. Hence,

the fulfillment and the unfulfillment of desires supported by possessiveness leads to immorality and impurity. Here I propose that the value of non-possession or self-restraint laid down by Lord Mahāvīra will be effective and efficient to resolve such above mentioned problems. Restrain over accumulation and restrain over desires - these are the two important factors which can help out to overcome these imbalances and in building a morally healthy and harmonious society and nation. Here I would like to mention few arguments which convince man to have control over desires. Before going into how we can have control over desires we will focus on why one should control desires.

Arguments for Control our Desires

1. In Economics there are two important words - need and desire. Ācārya Tulasī discussed three kinds of life-style based on these two factors by three equations.

A) Desires $>$ needs = *vikṛti*

B) Desires = needs = *prakṛti*

C) Desires $<$ needs = *saṁskṛti*.

That is to say, when desires are more than needs it will result into *vikṛti* (problematic) state. When desires are equal to needs it will result into *prakṛti* (naturalistic) state. While when desires are less than needs it will result into *saṁskṛti* (good) state. The fact is that man is the part of nature and not the master of nature. To live natural life he has to equalize his desires with needs if he couldn't minimize it.

2. Philosophically also we can prove that one cannot fulfill all the desires. Desires are infinite and materially one cannot fulfill infinite desires. Infinity is not the nature of materiality. It's the nature of spirituality. One can feel infinite happiness, infinite peace, etc. but cannot fulfill infinite desires. We all know that the things which do not possess the nature cannot be extracted from it. For example fire cannot quench the thirst and water cannot light the lamp. Similarly

infinite desires can be fulfilled in the spiritual world and not in material world. Gandhi has rightly said “Earth can fulfill one’s need but not one’s greed.”

3. There are two aspects of life-

A. Life of Peace and Well-being.

B. Life of Wealth and Prosperity.

According to HPI (Happy Planet Index, 2009), which measures the well-being of the countries reports that the countries which are highly developed such as United Kingdom, United States, etc. are at 74th and 114th rank, respectively from 143 states. While the countries which are not so highly developed or are developing have better level of well-being. They are countries like Costa Rica (1), Dominican Republic (2), India (35), etc. Hence, even by less economic development too man can live a happy and satisfied life. Therefore, money is not the only source of all the standards. After discussing all the points emphasising non-possession, we will discuss how one can attain the goal of self-restraint/non-possession.

Lord Mahāvīra propounded two kinds of vows - great vows and small vows. Great vows are for monks and nuns and small vows are for householders. The small vows are called *aṇuvrata*. Among twelve *aṇuvratas*⁶ one is *icchā-parimāṇa*, that is, control over desires. To strengthen this vow - Lord Mahāvīra has given some complementary vows. They are- *Upabhoga-paribhoga-parimāṇa vrata* and *Atithisamvibhāga*. The former *vrata* talks about control over personal consumption. Over consumption is the cause of immoral action. When one wants to consume more, he tries to possess more, he forgets about all values and virtues. It would not be wrong to say, mostly for more consumption and more accumulation man uses impure or immoral means as explained before. Even if wealth comes to him without using immoral means he should control over consumption. Morality says that man should share his wealth with those who are devoid of it. It will be a service to humanity. For the

upliftment of this act of sharing Lord Mahāvīra gave the vow of *Atithisamvibhāga*. It asks for sharing food to ascetic by laity but in this context it can be interpreted in the form of sharing things to the people devoid of it. Through this vow, the problem of poverty, unequal distribution of income and wealth can be mitigated.

The modern economy is encouraging to increase desires, production, consumption and distribution. On the other hand spirituality and morality inspire to control all this. Now the question is how to fill the gap between these two thoughts. Here, I would like to introduce a new model of economy envisioned by Ācārya Mahāprajña. While studying and editing the Jaina canons and texts Ācārya Mahāprajña found some of the maxims of economics given by Lord Mahāvīra.⁷ Analyzing all the current problems he prepared a new economic model called "Relative Economics". I would like to discuss some of the essential features of Relative economics.

1. The first consideration for a relative economics is coordination between human labour and machines. It is not only necessary that there is to be a increase in the utilization of human labour but the valuation of those labours should also be proper. They should not be exploited.
2. The second feature of relative economics is recognising the priorities and preferences of the society. Investment should essentially be increased in production of goods and services which form a part of the consumption of the common man.
3. The third feature of relative economics is the coordination between the present and future needs. Ensuring adequate availability of resources which could meet the requirements of both today and tomorrow should be an essential ingredient of the economic system. Preservation of ecology is necessary for this assurance.
4. The fourth feature of relative economics is the encouragement of decentralization of wealth and production.

Infact, the modern economy is money oriented while Relative economics is man and moral oriented. If this model is applied many of the problems can be overcome.

Thus, these are the ways which can help to develop morality through self-restraint. In this world where we are talking about world peace and moral society, it is necessary to awaken the inner consciousness of self-restraint. This consciousness will definitely build a society that is, happy and peaceful.

References :

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- 2 *Daśavaikālika sūtra*, 6.20.
- 3 *Uttarādhyayana sūtra*, 9.48.
- 4 *Thāṇāṃ*, 10.105.
- 5 *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, 1.3.
- 6 *Upāsakadaśā sūtra*, 1.11.
- 7 *Mahāvīra Kā Arthaśāstra*, Acarya Mahaprajna, Eng. tr. by S.R.Mohnot as *Economics of Lord Mahavira*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., In association with Adarsh Sahitya Sangha, New Delhi, 2004.
