

Advocacy of Intercultural Faith in Jain's Prism

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The Concept of Interdependence:

As far as my knowledge goes, the main cause of ever increasing environmental crisis is due to the one-dimensional outlook of certain religious beliefs. As Islamic religious text Quran cites in that God (Allaha) has made this creation and whatever available on the earth are made for consumption of men.⁶ The very parallel notion of establishing man as a superior being in this earth is found in the Christian's holy text Bible. Here it is said- "God created man in the image of himself in the image of God he created him male and female he created them." God blessed them saying to them, "Be truthful, multiply fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth. God said- "See, I give you all the seed bearing plants that are 'upon' the whole earth and this shall be your food."⁷

The task of *anekantic* Intercultural faith is nothing but to attack on the irrelevant belief systems which are causing heavy environmental pollution leading the entire human race in stake. Due to this notion that man is a privileged supreme being in the world and he has all the rights to exploit the nature is main cause of ecological imbalance.

Today, we see our mother Earth is facing the problem of global warming, climate change, lacking resources due to over consumerism, ozone layer depletion, unethical science leading to experimental violence, decreasing earth planet, all these leading to environmental degradation are the sufficient facts highlighting the very human survival at stake, We increasingly realize that human alone cannot live on this planet. Humans have to live in the company

of non-humans in complementary relationship.

The right perspective of ecology is enshrined in the Jain motto of *parasparopagraho Jivānām*, as quoted in the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*,⁸ which highlights that all living organisms, however big or small, irrespective of the degree of their sensory perceptions, are bound together by mutual support and interdependence. They are and should remain in a harmonious and judicious balance with nature. As man and nature are so interwoven with each other into the social fabric that there is a common thread, which binds us all. The non-violent *anekāntic* life style can provide solution to the problem of environmental pollution.

Violence vs. non-vegetarian food style

When we look at present time of scenario, the percentage of meat eaters in west are more than the vegetarians. It is due to the one-dimensional perspective that animal flesh provide sufficient amount of protein for body. Due to this misbelief, innocent animals are killed everyday for the sake of pleasing the palate.

Francois Peroux, Director of the Institute of Mathematics and Economics in Paris, has suggested that 'if meat and alcohol consumption in the west were reduced by 50% , the grain that would become available would be enough to solve all hunger and mal-nutritional problems in the third world war.'⁹ Moreover non-vegetarian food style is creating several major categories of diseases in the west including cardio-vascular, cerebrovascular, respiratory diseases and skin cancer.¹⁰ Research declares that four lakh people die out of meat-eating every year through heart disease, colon cancer or by kidney failures.¹¹

Not only this non-vegetarian life style is a cause of the continuing degradation of environment and depletion of life supporting natural resources but its reckless consumerism is the matter of serious concern. But ever increasing artificial needs of use of cosmetics, artificial show of furnished houses and offices, leading to violence of innocent beings. Animals are killed for experimentation and cutting of jungles is being carried on recklessly for meeting the demands of

the wooden raw material etc. are leading to climate change and huge environmental crisis.

Violence in Medical Science

The goal of medical science, after all, is to relieve people of pain and suffering and to reduce the sum total of human misery. But on the other hand, such manufacture of medicines are causing misery to other innocent creatures, is a matter of serious issue. The very concept of inter dependence of living beings as cited in the *Ācāraṅga Sūtra* paves us towards the truth that one cannot safeguard one's own existence by obliterating the existence of others.¹²

Modern scientific medicine is so vastly complicated that violence is simply unavoidable. There exists non-violent alternative health medicines which can solve not only our problems of human health but it will give remedy to the very survival of us which is dependent on and the survival of the other creatures. Today we have realized the value of life and bio-diversity and hence, we realize the importance of preservation of life, importance of "live and let live".

Jain's spiritual ecological thinking which is based on the principle of applied philosophy of *Anekānta* and *Nayavāda* and on the concept of *parasparopagraho jīvānām* alone can revitalize the relations of humanity with its ecological co-partners viz. all other living species and the natural environment of air, water, land and space. It seeks to get rid of self-centric egoistic mode of thought and behaviour. If this principle of inter-relatedness is understood in depth of heart then the culture of non-violence for the better promotion of socially beneficial, peace-fostering and nature friendly way of life can be established on this earth.

The Concept of Universal Brotherhood (*vatsalya*)

It means affection towards the spiritual brethren. It is disinterested or dispassionate affection,¹³ which involves a selfless love for the high ideal of emancipation. This concept of universal brotherhood has encouraged the Jaina layman to such an extent that most of the Jains are working for the cause of social service by

donating their small portion of income to the needy persons in the form of food, medicine, education, shelter, scholarships, etc. and helping those poor who are unable to cure the disease of cancer etc.

Jain laymen want that equal opportunities of education, earning and the like are received by every individual without any distinction of race, religion, sex and nationality.¹⁴ Where there is love, there is no exploitation. To treat individuals as mere means is decried and denied in Jainism. Where there is *vātsalya*, all our dealing with others will be inspired by reverence, the role of force and domination will be minimized. Thus the quality of *vātsalya* is held in high regard by the Jain community.

Throughout India and abroad, Jaina community persons due to the *vātsalya* virtue sake, are very much affectionate in the circumstances of famine, drought, flood and donate with full heartedly for the good of the society. Each lay man sees around his residence if any neighbour or any person is deprived of food, shelter, education, and medicine and if at all he finds such fellow, he indirectly comes forward to share his financial assistance to him so that he can get basic necessities of life.

Although the similar concepts of social share is being discussed in Islamic religion on the name of *Jakāt* i.e. each Muslim should share 1/5th of his income to the needy person. Even in Christian religion too, such injections for social service is found. But as far as Jain concept of universal brotherhood is concerned, it has some deeper meaning rather than mere helping the needy. But it has highest implication that layman considers others hunger and poverty as own, as he accepts the equality of souls. He not only comes forward for help but he also treats others human, never tries to exploit the workers working under him and never indulges in malpractices of adulteration etc. This kind of *Vedic* concept of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* i.e. we the children of the world are a single family. This universal view of brotherhood and the concept of single global family if brought on to the earth, the problem of economic inequality,

exploitation, political violence, racial-religious riots, etc. can be eradicated. The dream of Gandhian stateless state will come true on the earth. So *Anekāntic* perspective breaks the barriers of various belief systems and comes forward for Intercultural faith.

Conclusion

Anekāntvāda and *Nayavāda* puts a healing touch at the root of human psyche and tries to stop the war of beliefs. It makes all absolutes in the field of thought quite irrelevant and naive, imparts maturity to the thought process and supplies flexibility and originality to human mind. If the mankind will properly understand and adopt this doctrine of *nayavāda* it will make us realize that real revolution was not the French or the Russian; the real revolution was the one, which taught the man to develop his power of understanding from all possible aspects.

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अनुकरणीय उदाहरण

सम्यग्ज्ञान प्रचारक मण्डल के उपाध्यक्ष गुरुभक्त श्रावकरत्न श्री पारसमल जी चोरडिया, उज्जैन वालों ने अपनी सुपौत्री के विवाह-दिवस का शुभारम्भ प्रातःकालीन सामूहिक सामायिक-साधना से किया। वर एवं वधू दोनों पक्षों के लगभग 140 लोगों ने सामायिक-साधना की। इससे वातावरण सौहार्दमय बन गया। विवाह समारोह में सचित्त फूलों एवं जमीकंद का प्रयोग पूर्णतः वर्जित रहा।

आवश्यक सूचना

अखिल भारतीय श्री जैन रत्न हितैषी श्रावक संघ, जोधपुर द्वारा संघ कार्यालय प्रभारी श्री प्रकाशचन्द जी सालेचा को संघ एवं संघ की सहयोगी संस्थाओं के कार्यक्रमों और गतिविधियों के समन्वित रूप से प्रचार-प्रसार एवं प्रबन्धन हेतु 'मुख्य प्रबन्धक (प्रचार-प्रसार एवं प्रशासन)' नियुक्त किया गया है। उनके सम्पर्क सूत्र- 09414126279

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